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The Moral Agent in the Laozi and Plato

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Declaration

I, Yinlin Guan, hereby declare the following. The present thesis, submitted for examination in pursuit of a PhD by Research in Philosophy, has been entirely composed by myself, and it has not been submitted in pursuit of any other academic degree, or professional qualification.

Signature: Yinlin Guan 

Date: 30-09-2020

Abstract

The theory of the moral agent is the normative theory which prescribes actions following the higher authority. In this thesis, I conduct a comparative analysis of Plato and the *Laozi* to uncover what they say about the moral agent. My findings will show that the same theory is used, in relation to the formation of the moral agent, the final moral ends and moral motivations, in ancient Chines and Greek philosophies, in particular the *Laozi* and Plato.

With regard to the evidence of the notion of moral agent in the *Laozi* and Plato, I find that both encourage people in a socio-political context to follow the role model set by an exemplary figure in each, which is the sage in the *Laozi* and the philosopher-king in Plato. With regard to the process of the education/cultivation of people to the stage of the role model, each related aspect of the exemplary figure has been presented, such as the final moral ends, moral psychology and their actions.

I argue that we can find that the moral agent can be cultivated/educated by following a higher authority in the *Laozi* and Plato, the *dao* and the cosmic god respectively, whereas the relation between the moral agent and human society are presented differently in each philosophy. Both the *dao* and the cosmic god represent the highest good for humans, because they contain the principles of the order for humans to emulate. We can find that the final moral ends for the *Laozi* is to live in accordance with the *dao,* whereas for Plato it is to become godlike as much as possible. On the basis of the relation between the moral agent and the final moral ends, I argue that although both the *Laozi* and Plato draw attention to the connection between desires and motivation of action for moral agents, the treatment of knowledge is different between, which leads to a difference in the treatment of desires. Both think that desires are necessary for the motivations of the moral agent to act. Moral agents can be cultivated (the *Laozi*) and educated (in Plato) and controlled in a certain way so as to regulate the desires that would motivate them to act. The moral motivation for

the *Laozi* would for the moral agent to have no desires, whereas the best life for the moral agent in Plato would be that the rational soul rules the whole human body and soul. For the *Laozi* acting *wuwei* and being in the status of having no desires is to live in accordance with the *dao*, whereas for Plato, letting the rational part of the soul rule the life of human beings is the final moral end that leads the human life to become as godlike as possible.

The finding of this thesis is that we can identify, interpret and evaluate the notion of the moral agent including the relation to the formation of moral agent, the final moral ends and moral psychology in both the *Laozi* and Plato. By identifying the notion of the moral agent in the *Laozi* and Plato, I demonstrate the value this could add to discussions in contemporary moral theories.

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Introduction

The theory of moral agent is the normative theory which prescribes actions following the higher authority. In this thesis, I conduct a comparative analysis of Plato and the *Laozi* to uncover what they have say about the moral agent. I shall specifically relate my analysis to their discussions on the education and cultivation, and related aspects of the moral agent. My research will, hopefully, inform further discussion on this topic in contemporary moral philosophy. Over recent decades, a sharp distinction has been drawn by Christopher Gill between action-centred and agent-centred moral normative theories in order to differentiate the focal points of ancient ethics and contemporary morality[1] This distinction is based on the general questions these theories explore, examine and discuss, e.g. action-centred theories decode what action is right and what action is wrong and provide decision procedures to guide moral agents to perform right actions; whereas agent-centred theories focus on issues moral agents adopt, such as vision, beliefs, motives and communal values. In contemporary moral theories, action-centred moral normative theories are known commonly as consequentialism and deontology, whereas agent-centred moral normative theories are known as virtue ethics. However, care needs to be taken since consequentialism, deontology and virtue ethics take a variety of forms, and in some cases bridge the distinction of being agent-centred or action-centred. For example, the most common Western form of consequentialism is utilitarianism, which avows that moral agents should perform actions that can maximise the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people. This is also known as 'act-consequentialism', which becomes a decision-making procedure advocating that an action is right if, and only if, the action maximises happiness. Rule-consequentialism, as a subdivision of consequentialism, intends to reconcile deontology and

[1] Gill, Christopher (ed.) (2005). *Virtue, Norms, and Objectivity: Issues in Ancient and Modern Ethics*. Oxford University Press, p.1.

consequentialism. As it notes that "an act is wrong if and only if it is forbidden by the code of rules whose internalisation by the overwhelming majority of everyone everywhere in each new generation has maximum expected value in terms of well-being (with some priority for the worst off)", the rule-consequentialist takes over deontologist moral rules as their prerequisite internalised social rules, and then conducts consequentialist calculating principles. On the one hand, rule-consequentialism reconciles the certain tension between consequentialism and deontology; on the other, it also blurs the distinction between consequentialism and deontology. Besides the common distinctions of either following moral rules or aiming for maximum happiness, or justifying that an action is good, there is another distinction between consequentialism and deontology, which is the contrast between agent-neutral and agent-relative ethical considerations.[2]

While my thesis is not tasked to research contemporary moral ethics in order to make fine-grained distinctions between different fields and disciplines or to reconcile disputes between them, these disputes frequently concern the nature of the moral agent. In addition virtue ethics has roots in ancient Greek philosophy and argues that the moral agent is the criterion to measure if the

[2] Agent-neutral moral theory indicates that it offers moral agents an identical set of substantive aims, whereas agent-relative moral theories indicate that an act is right if it maximises the agent's utility. It is commonly held that consequentialism is considered as agent-neural and deontology is considered as agent-relative. Agent-neutral moral theory has the moral value from an objective perspective, so for example, for any moral agent from an act-consequential perspective, an action is right if and only if the action maximises happiness. The reasoning for the performance of the action does not change according to different moral agents. Deontology is always considered as agent-relative moral theory, because this kind of theory gives each moral agent a particular concern for what reason or motive the moral agent intends to act in a certain way, rather than the general action or reasoning for all moral agents. Dougherty argues that a moral rule can be agent-neutral and deontological, because he suggests an alternative to deontic constraints. See papers: Dougherty, T. (2013). Agent-neutral deontology. Philosophical Studies, 163(2), 527-537. Hammerton, Matthew. (2017). Is agent-neutral deontology possible? Journal of Ethics & Social Philosophy, 12(3), p.319.

action *per se* is moral.[3] Thus the aim of my research is to revisit texts of ancient Chinese and Greek philosophy and examine the extent to which they discuss the moral agent, particularly focusing on the formation of the moral agent, the final moral ends and moral psychology, and to understand the relevance of these discussions in contemporary moral theories. Specifically, my research has two aims; first to use a comparative philosophy approach to identify what the texts of the *Laozi* and Plato articulate about the nature of the moral agent, and second to reveal how this comparative analysis can add to the many discussions on the nature of the moral agent in contemporary moral theories in the future.

1.1 Comparative Grounds --- Moral Agent

Contemporary philosophy is comprised of a wide field of theories and approaches and it is beyond the scope and purpose of this work to research them in detail. Therefore, for the purpose of my research moral agent will hereafter be understood in the specific sense that it encompasses any person who is able to make moral judgements based on the notion of right and wrong and taking responsibility for their actions.[4] I recognise this definition of moral agent is not used by all strands of contemporary philosophy but, as long as my

[3] Williams, B. (1993). *Shame and necessity* (Sather classical lectures; v. 57). Berkeley; London: University of California Press; Anscombe, G. E. M. (1958) "Modern Moral Philosophy." Philosophy, vol. 33, no. 124, pp.1-6; Frankena, W. (1973). Ethics (Second ed., Prentice-Hall foundations of philosophy series). Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.; Hursthouse, R., (1999). On virtue ethics, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[4] Boostrom, R. (1998). *The student as moral agent.* Journal of Moral Education, 27/ (2), 179-190, p. 180. Robert Boostrom claims that "In a general sense, a moral agent is rational and deliberative. A moral agent acts and judges in accordance with her own understanding of the good. A moral agent is a subject, not an object, and thus cannot be a receptacle." Mayo, B. (1968). The Moral Agent. *Royal Institute of Philosophy Lectures, 1*, 47-63. In Bernard's paper, he focuses on the notion of moral agent in the respect of the social role, I think that is also important to consider, and the *Laozi* and Plato also consider the importance of the social role for the moral agent.

perspective is clear I believe that the findings from my comparative analysis of the ancient texts will be understood by all.

Another aspect of my research that must be clarified is a recognition of the significant differences between the ancient texts and contemporary philosophy. The exact terminologies of some concepts may be missing in the ancient texts, but notions can be detected and represented through detailed exploration and analysis of them. For example, the term 'moral agent' appears nowhere in the *Laozi* or Platonic dialogues. "Progressivist thinking"[5] , a term coined by Williams, argues that there was no moral agency in antiquity (in the ancient Greek world) as "there were not even agents in Homeric literature. Plato's and Aristotle's people are allowed to have been agents, but they perhaps still fell short of moral agency, because – on some of these accounts at least – they lacked a proper concept of the will". However, the understanding of moral agency should be refuted, according to Williams, because progressivists are mistaken about the degree of shift in underlying conceptions from antiquity to contemporary thinking. Thus, although there are no such terms as morality, moral agent or moral agency etc. in antiquity, the notions are nevertheless present. Williams notes that the moral agent in antiquity is a person who has the capacity to deliberate, to conclude, to act, to exert oneself, to make oneself do things and to maintain human life.[6] On the basis of Williams' understanding of moral agent, the 'will' that motivates the moral agent to become an autonomous person interacting with the external world is not, as the progressivists supposed, absent from the ancient world, but rather the nature of the moral agent in antiquity is similar to the contemporary understanding of the moral agent. In my thesis, by adopting the definition of

[5] The progressivist idea is that the notions and ethical conceptions in antiquity world is primitive and less developed than the contemporary ethical theories, undergoing the specific process of history, those primitive ethical notions, conceptions, actions etc. have been replaced by more finely defined and the well-argued set of ethical conceptions that construes better form of ethical experience. (Williams, B. (1993).)

[6] Williams, B. (1993), chapter 2.

moral agent from Williams, I mean that the term 'moral agent' refers to human moral agents, not agency, because in both Plato and the *Laozi* it is not only human beings that have the capacity for moral agency. For example, in the *Laozi*, the *dao* and the *de* can be moral agencies, as can the soul in Plato, nevertheless I will not use the term moral agent to refer to the *dao*, the *de* or the soul in my thesis. A moral agent in my thesis is an autonomous person or entity which can deliberate and take decisions; they are also accountable for their actions and the consequences of their actions.

Applying Williams' definition of moral agent to my thesis, is likely to be challenged because the capability of rational choice of the individual moral agent is missing in the *Laozi*.[7] However, I believe that many of those scholars likely to challenge the notion that individuals are not autonomous in the *Laozi* are motivated by the 'political principle' and focus on the well-being of their country and people. Notwithstanding that it is sensible to be wary of harbouring a specific preconceived notion of moral agent when examining the *Laozi* and Plato, which might lead to misinterpreting the texts, the potential understanding that could be realised by comparing them is worthy of serious study. A further question on the feasibility and benefit of a comparative philosophy approach in my research is; if research can only be done from the perspective of one culture or timescale why make the effort to compare them? I acknowledge that it is difficult to justify any result that could *only* be achieved by means of comparative philosophy, and that the comparative approach brings extra complexities encompassing the subtlety of different languages, cultural differences and historical impacts to name but a few. Nevertheless, comparative philosophy is one of many approaches to study this issue and one which my research demonstrates facilitates some intellectual findings that have been overlooked with unilateral deliberation.

[7] Gentz, J. (2011). Rational choice and the Chinese discourse on the Unity of the Three Religions (*sanjiao heyi* 三教合一). *Religion, 41*(4), 535-546, p.544, as Gentz argues, the political cannot be subsumed under the autonomous principle in Bourdieux' field theory.

There are two further reasons why comparative philosophy is important in my research. Firstly, the study of sinology in the context of western cultures has been undertaken in a haphazard manner. Keeping the western cultural background in mind, sinologists consciously or subconsciously compare exotic cultures with their own throughout the process of learning.[8] As Chad Hansen indicated, comparison is "inherently" required for a philosophical text composed in one language, which is interpreted or understood in another language.[9] Whether undertaking cross-cultural comparison or considering only within one culture, comparison *per se* as a method of acquiring knowledge is not superficial or unfamiliar. For example, a philosophy undergraduate learns consequentialism as a general moral theory, but further study and research would lead them to encounter act-consequentialism, rule-consequentialism and deontology etc. Comparison of these moral theories provides clarity and enables the student to learn the knowledge of similarities and differences from the same perspective, such as on the question "what is right to do?" or "how should moral agents live?". If we zoom out from the lens of comparison, the scope becomes wider and wider until the comparison is between eastern and western philosophy. The plethora of texts available for us to compare and contrast lead us to establish fruitful outcomes of similarities and differences between these texts. Nevertheless, this raises the questions "and then? And so what?" As Ralph Weber argues "if we compare ancient China and ancient Greece for their 'ethics', we minimally must claim that both *comparata* are relatable to some same concept of 'ethics'. The aspect of ancient Chinese ethics is of necessity substitutable with the corresponding aspect of ancient Greek ethics, because it is the same aspect."[10] Weber terms this kind of

[8] Li, X.A., 2017. *Comparative encounters between Artaud, Michaux and the Zhuangzi : rationality, cosmology and ethics* First., London: Taylor and Francis, p. 9.

[9] Hansen, C., 1983. *Language and logic in ancient China*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, pp. 8-9.

[10] Weber, R (2015). "On Comparing Ancient Chinese and Greek Ethics: The tertium comparationis as Tool of Analysis and Evaluation," in King, R. A. H. (ed.), *The Good Life and*

comparison "tertium comparationis" and argues that everything that can be compared with something else does not always justify them being compared. It is only meaningful to compare two things from a related or designated perspective.[11] Richard King summed it up as "likeness is a triadic relation: *a* is like *b*, in respect of *c* – is the form any result of comparison should have, correctly".[12]

In terms of comparative philosophy methodology, I agree with Weber that it is meaningful that comparing *a* with *b* in respect of *c* makes scholars think and choose the comparative notions carefully so as not to fall into what Weber called 'illegitimate comparison'.[13] In my thesis, in terms of comparative philosophy methodology, I will adopt Weber's methodology with c being a scheme to which both comparative notions *a* and *b* should be initially capable of fitting in, and then the comparison between *a* and *b* should be conducted and analysed. That is to say, "the respect of *c*" is a question such as "what is a right action?", and both consequentialism and deontology are capable of providing and developing a systematic answer, and thus can conduct a meaningful comparison.

The second reason to defend the use of comparative philosophy of the *Laozi* and Plato through the lens of the moral agent is to observe overlooked perspectives of these texts. As Li noted, the perspectives of the viewer will change the reality of perception.[14] Comparing the *Laozi* and Plato via the lens of the moral agent facilitates new interpretations and discussions of each on their own or both together. By 'through the lens of the moral agent' I mean that

Conceptions of Life in Early China and Graeco-Roman Antiquity, Berlin: De Gruyter (Chinese-Western discourse), pp. 29-56, p. 31.

[11] Ibid.

[12] King, R. A. H (2015). "Introduction," in King, R. A. H. (ed.), *The Good Life and Conceptions of Life in Early China and Graeco-Roman Antiquity*, Berlin: De Gruyter (Chinese-Western discourse), p. 7.

[13] Ibid, p. 52.

[14] Li, 2015, p. 12.

there is a notion of moral agent that can be found and read about in the texts, not that Plato and the *Laozi* have held certain viewpoints regarding the moral agent. In order to defend the position that the comparison will observe overlooked perspectives, I shall present it from the viewpoint we could detect the notion of the moral agent in the *Laozi* and Plato, and in what way that I mean something is neglected. First, I suggest that some central socio-political figures and their relationships with the sage and the philosopher-king respectively in the Laozi and Plato are insufficiently examined and discussed. While scholars of the *Laozi* focus mostly on the discussion of sage, sage-hood and sage-rulers, the relationships of kings and dukes 王公 *wanggong* (chapter 42), nobles and kings 侯王 *houwang* (chapter 39), officers and heads 官长 *guanzhang* (chapter 28), generals and armies 将军 *jiangjun* (chapter 31), generic rulers 人主 *renzhu* (chapter 30) and the masses 民/百姓 *min*/*baixing* (chapter 3、17) with the sage are entitled to be examined philosophically in the way they model themselves on the principles of the sage-hood.[15] On the other hand, we find that Plato focuses on the notions of philosopher, philosopher-king and non-philosophers in the *Republic*, the *Theaetetus*, the *Phaedo* and the *Timaeus* etc. However, the discussion of the citizens in the first city and the second city in the *Republic* being moral agents who potentially can become philosophers is missing. By examining the texts of the *Laozi* and Plato through the lens of the moral agent, people/roles who make decisions and act on them in both the socio-political and philosophical senses jump out in front of us. And that is the importance of my research on the comparison of the moral agent in the *Laozi* and Plato.

In the following section, I will sketch the notion of the moral agent in both the *Laozi* and Plato to reveal my rection to the two notions. In the *Laozi*, moral

[15] The literatures and related topic on sage, sage-hood and sage-rulers are numerous. For example, Liu, Xiaogan, 2014. *Dao Companion to Daoist Philosophy*, Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands. Ames, R.T. & Huainanzi, 1983. *The art of rulership : a study in ancient Chinese political thought*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

agents who are rulers or officers, such as dukes (王公 *wanggong)*, nobles and kings (侯王 *houwang)* appear mostly in the sense of the socio-political class. Due to the essential and peculiar characteristics of literary form and content[16], the *Laozi* guides each reader to become an individual moral agent who could take advice from the text, while at the same time offering universal principles/suggestions demonstrated by the ideal figure – the sage 聖人 *shengren* – as the moral agent in the philosophical sense. Some scholars consider the *Laozi* more as a toolkit of governing for rulers than a philosophical and metaphysical textbook containing some systematic notions to contemplate like the *dao*. For example, Creel argues that "the Lao-tzu has much of the 'contemplative', but more of the 'purposive' aspect", because he feels the *Laozi* offers abundant advice to "kings and feudal lords and ministers on how to get and hold power. It is less concerned with the vision of the *Tao*, as the great whole, and more with the *Tao* as a technique of control".[17] The text of the *Laozi* presents some guidelines of governing for the socio-political roles such as emperors, officers and individuals by means of advising them to embody the *dao* and live in accordance with it. It would be difficult, and rather unnecessary, to make such a statement that the *Laozi* is more "purposive", because being either "purposive" or "contemplative"[18] depends on the perspectives when interpreting the text. Regardless from which perspective, one of the most important aspects in the text is the connection between the sage, who is the exemplar moral figure, and the individual moral agents, the socio-political roles. This connection shows the sage demonstrating a set of universal principles, including their way of thinking, their way of ruling, their behaviours and reactions expected when facing given contexts etc., as advice to emperors

[16] The language of the *Laozi* is mysterious and obscure. The sense of the many terms (can be symbols or metaphors) – such as the spirit of valley 谷神 *gushen* (chapter 6) or dark and profound female 玄牝 *xuanpin* remains unclear.

[17] Creel, H. G (1970). *What is Taoism?: And other studies in Chinese cultural history*. Chicago, [Ill.] ; London: University of Chicago Press, p. 6.

[18] Ibid.

and officers; whereas an individual reader draws the connection between themselves and the sage, imposing the set of universal principles to the specific situations they are facing in human society. In this way, the sage is the ideal moral agent to guide both the socio-political roles in the *Laozi* and its readers, who can be considered as the empirical moral agents.

Unlike the *Laozi*, which does not have a clear notion of the moral agent, the notion of the moral agent can be easily spotted in various Platonic dialogues. While written from a different socio-political context, Plato wrote in a similar fashion to the *Laozi*, with two levels of the notion of moral agents, the empirical level and the philosophical level. Many noted scholars have explored the notion of the moral agent in Plato's works. Nails reveals the historical backgrounds and relationships among protagonists of Plato's dialogues in ancient Greek history in a complex series of connections among their social, political and philosophical stances in *The People of Plato*. [19] As aforementioned, Williams also examined moral agency in detail in ancient Greek literature. Furthermore, the fundamental notion of philosopher and philosopher-king has been thoroughly examined and reinforced. Bobonich notes that there is a consensus that philosophers in Plato are capable of living truly happy and flourishing lives, whereas non-philosophers live an incomplete life because they fail to attain the right virtues.[20] However, the predominant discussions of philosopher, including the notion of philosophical (the *Republic* book V, VI and VII etc.), of their education (in the *Republic* III and IV), of philosophical king etc. are so complicated and tempting that the notion of moral agent in the sense of functioning in the socio-political and philosophical systems are unintentionally overlooked.

[19] Nails, D., 2002. *The people of Plato: a prosopography of Plato and other Socratics*, Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett.

[20] Bobonich, C., 2002. *Plato's Utopia recast : his later ethics and politics*, Oxford: Clarendon, pp. 3-4.

In the *Republic* Books 2 and 4, Plato depicts two cities, the first city – is named by Glaucon as the city of pigs (the *Republic* 372d), and the second city – the ideal city (the *Republic* 412b-427d). Plato intends to show that the virtue of justice can be attained through cooperation among citizens in the city of pigs,[21] whereas justice in the ideal city is attained by the education of the moral agent who to become a philosopher, works in a socio-political system as a ruler. In the city of pigs, "the essential minimum amount of people would be four or five for a city, including farmer, builder, weaver and cobbler … let's see what sort of life our citizens will lead when they've been provided for in the way we have been describing." (the *Republic* 369d-372d), In the city of pigs, citizens as moral agents have implicit rankings demonstrated by the sequence of the presentation of each professional, however individuals alone would be unable to survive, and it would be impossible to conduct the notion of justice. The virtue of justice is conveyed by cooperation among citizens and can only be achieved if each citizen complements the others by doing their own deeds and doing them well.[22] Socrates moves back to the depiction of the ideal city, and because Glaucon does not want to live in the city of pigs, Socrates agrees to expand the ideal city to a "luxurious" city (the *Republic* 372e). In this city, the class of soldier emerges to act as guardians of the state and Plato presents them, along with (the *Republic* 376d), rulers, non-philosophers and philosophers, (the *Republic* 486a) as moral agents in the socio-political system. However, as Williams points out, some scholars accept that Plato's and Aristotle's people are allowed to have been agents but perhaps fell short of moral agency, because – in some accounts at least – they lacked a proper concept of the "will".[23] I argue that is not true however, because Plato's writings contain the notion of the *psyche* soul as motives for moral agents to act. The

[21] Annas, J., & Plato. (1981). An introduction to Plato's Republic. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 74.

[22] Pappas, N. (1995). /Plato and the Republic (Routledge philosophy guidebooks). London: Routledge, p. 67.)

[23] Williams, B. (1993). *Shame and necessity* (Sather classical lectures ; v. 57). Berkeley ; London: University of California Press.

embodied human soul consists of three parts, the rational, the spirited and the appetitive, each of which has its own desires that trigger the moral agent to act, an argument I will fully develop in chapter 3. By comparing Plato to the *Laozi*, I can mirror the two philosophical systems with each other, that will allow me to identify and explore neglected areas of research.

In contemporary moral theory, agent-centred theories have been a subject of discussion in recent decades. Michael Slote proposes a position of agent-based moral theory that is distinct from agent-focused moral theories.[24] While I do not wish to engage in detailed discussion regarding specific fine-grained distinctions between agent-centred and agent-based, it is important I take them into account in my thesis. On the basis of the analysis of the *Laozi* and Plato, there are some findings to inform the discussions of the moral agent as well as its cardinal features, such as the formation, the final moral ends, and moral psychology.

As John Cooper points out, contemporary ethics is action-centred, whereas ancient ethics are more concerned with the traits of the characters of moral agents, or how to make a person virtuous.[25] It seems commonplace that for

[24] Slote, M. (1995). Agent-Based Virtue Ethics. *Midwest Studies In Philosophy, 20*(1), 83-101.

[25] Cooper, John M., (2013). *Pursuits of Wisdom: Six Ways of Life in Ancient Philosophy from Socrates to Plotinus*. Princeton/Oxford: Princeton UP, pp. 3-4. I agree with Annas that action centred and agent centred is not the main difference between modern and ancient moral theory, but rather self and others. (Annas, J., [1999]. *Platonic ethics, old and new* (Ithaca, N.Y.; London: Cornell University Press.) G. E. M. Anscombe's arguments that there are distinctively moral motives and actions, and advocate a return to ancient *eudemonia*, because contemporary ethicists have paid too much attention to those abstract terms such as 'good', 'bad', 'right', 'wrong' and so forth but have ignored terms like 'sensitive', 'compassionate' and 'courageous' which mostly refer to virtue-like aspects of human character. William Frankena argues that the theory of virtue may not be able to construct an ethical theory, but if an ethical theory does not include the account of virtues, then this ethical theory is incomplete. Rosalind Hursthouse actually takes a stronger position than Anscombe and Frankena. She argues that as normative ethics, virtue ethics has a constructed principle that formulates what virtues and human dispositions

contemporary ethicists the focus of consequentialism and deontology differ from the focus of virtue ethics. The principal question of consequentialists and deontologists, generally speaking, is "what is the right thing to do?"; whereas virtue ethics begins with the question of "what is the best life to live? Or how should one live?" However, it is unjust to say that consequentialism and deontology neglect the perspective of moral agents, including virtues and motives, which would affect their decision making. Deontologists consider, as Kant argued, it is not the consequences that make an action right or wrong, but the motives that endow an action with moral value. The motive he argues arises from universal principles discovered by reason.[26] On the other hand, consequentialists also consider the perspective of moral agents. John Mill argues "it is a misapprehension of the utilitarian mode of thought, to conceive it as implying the people should fix their minds upon so wide a generality as world, or society at large. … the multiplication of the happiness is, according to utilitarian ethics, the object of virtue: the occasions on which any person (except one in a thousand) has it in his power to do this on an extended scale, in other words, to be a public benefactor, are but exceptional; and on these occasions alone is he called on to consider public utility; in every other case, private utility in the interest or happiness of some few persons, is all he has to attend to."[27]

Both the *Laozi* and Plato take a stance which differs from John Mill's idea of moral agent in respect of moral motivation and from the understanding of the

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are, and also provides and explains the decision procedure that an action is good if, and only if, it is what a virtuous person would do. Anscombe, G. E. M. (1958) "Modern Moral Philosophy." Philosophy, vol. 33, no. 124, pp.1-6. Frankena, W. (1973). Ethics (Second ed., Prentice-Hall foundations of philosophy series). Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, p. 63. Hursthouse, R., (1999). On virtue ethics, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 28.

[26] Kant, I., Gregor, M., & Timmermann, J., (2013). *Groundwork of the metaphysics of morals* (Rev. edition / translation rev. by Jens Timmermann ed., Cambridge texts in the history of philosophy). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 67.

[27] Mill, J., (2009). *Utilitarianism*. Auckland, New Zealand: The Floating Press, pp.33-4. G. E. Moore, Principia Ethica (Cambridge, 1903 [rev. edn. 1993])

nature of happiness. It is necessary to elucidate that Mill's idea of moral agent is at the empirical level, who merely considers or thinks that happiness (pleasure) at both private and public levels is only desirable in itself.[28] Henry Sidgwick argues that on the basis of Mill's understanding of the nature of happiness, Mill was a psychological egoist if he believes people only covet their own pleasure because it is the only thing that is desirable.[29] However, the *Laozi* and Plato do not consider pleasure as the only desirable thing, on the contrary, to a degree both consider abandoning bodily pleasure in order to achieve the highest good (as discussed in chapter 3).

For the notion of the good, I find that in both the *Laozi* and Plato, not only do they distinguish different kinds of the good including the intrinsic good and the best consequences of actions, but they further their arguments that the best consequences of actions are considered as the desirable good.[30] If moral agents are developed to have intrinsic good, then the moral agent can have both intrinsic good and the best consequences. Thus, pleasure and the best consequences are the good for both the *Laozi* and Plato, but they cannot be categorised as the highest good which are intrinsic goodness and best consequences (I discuss this further in chapter 1). In the *Republic* Book II, in order to establish the definition of justice, Glaucon and Socrates define and discuss three kinds of good, one of which is an unmodified version of consequentialism in which good is considered only for its consequences. Plato argues that justice/virtue should be good in itself as well as for its consequences (the *Republic* 357d-358a). This means that with virtue, not only

[28] G.E. Moore also argues that only pleasure/ happiness is good in itself. G. E. Moore, Principia Ethica (Cambridge, 1903 [rev. edn. 1993]).

[29] Sidgwick, H., & Singer, M. (2000). *Essays on ethics and method*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, chapter 1.

[30] Korsgaard, C. (1983). Two Distinctions in Goodness. *The Philosophical Review, 92*(2), 169-195, pp. 169-170. Korsgaard argues that there are two distinctions in goodness, they are intrinsic goodness and the instrumental goodness. The intrinsic goodness means that if a thing that is intrinsically good, then it is valued for its own sake; whereas the instrumental goodness means that if a thing that is instrumentally good, then it is valued for something else.

do moral agents have intrinsic good, but they can also reason and choose the proper actions in a given situation to gain the best consequences. In similar fashion, we can find that there are two kinds of good in the *Laozi,* which are implicitly manifested by a dense and vague concept -- *wuwei* 無為 translated as 'non-desires triggered action'.[31] The action of *wuwei* 無為 is conducted by different agencies leading to different outcomes in the *Laozi*.[32] The crisis of the consequences of conducting *wuwei* 無為 by different agencies is depicted in the *Laozi*, where human beings, heaven and earth, the *de* and the *dao* are all considered as agencies able to conduct *wuwei* 無為.[33] Human beings act *wuwei* for the purpose of attaining the benefit of *wuwei* (chapter 47). Benefits are assessed by a calculation of pros and cons, or gains and losses. Once human beings consider benefits, their reasoning on acting *wuwei* is initiated not from the good of *wuwei,* but rather the benefits generated from acting *wuwei* compared with other sorts of actions. However, contrasted with *wuwei* performed by the *dao* and the *de*, benefits (有益 *youyi*) are incomparable with "that nothing cannot be done" (*wu bu wei* 無不爲, chapter 37) and it is entirely done by and of itself and not by means of anything else (*wu yi wei* 無以為, chapter 38). Both of these are the outcome of the *dao* and the *de* operating in the mode of *wuwei* as the intrinsic good. Not only do they possess the intrinsic

[31] I will have a detailed discussion about the notion of *wuwei* 無為 in Chapters 37 and 43 non-desires triggered action in the *Laozi* in chapter 1,2,3 in different aspects. For now, I summarise my arguments in the main chapters, I argue that *wuwei* is a kind of action that is performed by the moral agent who is in the status of having no desires 無欲 *wuyu*, (The detailed discussion on having no desires 無欲 *wuyu* will be displayed in chapter 3.), with the status of *wuyu*, actions are triggered purely based on the reactions that the moral agent situated in the context perceives the context and provides the proper actions.

[32] I use agency because *dao* and de cannot be human agents, and both always operate in the mode of *wuwei*, which I will argue in detail in the first chapter. I use mode instead of action for *dao* and de because initially they do not act or are not acted upon, but operate themselves consistently [常 *chang*] through activities with the internalised and spontaneous cause.

[33] Chapter 3, 25, 37, 38 etc.

good itself but would also achieve the best consequences. Thus, we can see that for both *Laozi* and Plato not only do the virtues of justice and *wuwei* contain an intrinsic value, but they also have an instrumental value that can achieve the best consequences.

Through the comparison of the *Laozi* and Plato, not only do I discover new viewpoints to interpret the texts, it also allows me to bridge the ancient with the modern, and west with east in terms of discussing moral theory. The same approach can be employed to consider moral motivation. Both the *Laozi* and Plato discuss the notion of happiness in the sense of a thriving human life, with pleasure and desires, except in the text of the *Laozi*, there is no such term or concept as "duty". Both believe that desires are a necessary condition for a moral agent to act, however, there is a difference between desires that motivate a moral agent to act for the sake of gaining pleasure and those that motivate a moral agent to act for the sake of being good per se. By the action for the sake of being good, I mean the action that is the most appropriate out of the available choices for the moral agent to make.

Kant distinguishes three kinds of motivations, "you may perform an action from duty that is, do it because you think it is right thing to do, you may perform it from immediate inclination, because you want to do it for its own sake, or because you enjoy doing action of that kind. Or, finally, you may perform an action because you are impelled to do so by another inclination, that is as a means to some further end."[34] Korsgaard interprets this passage as Kant contrasting the right action that is motivated by duty with the right action that is motivated in some other way.[35] It seems to me that what Korsgaard means by "in some other way" is that the action motivated by "the inclinations" of the moral agent performing an action is different from the action that is performed

[34] Kant, I., Gregor, M., & Timmermann, J., 2013. *Groundwork of the metaphysics of morals* (Rev. edition / translation rev. by Jens Timmermann ed., Cambridge texts in the history of philosophy). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[35] Ibid.

on the basis of the motivation from duty. In the former context, even if the action is the same in both cases, if the moral agent allows the action to be purely driven by their desires then the action does not possess any moral worth, because the action is not guided by the moral rules defined by moral considerations.[36] On the other hand, consequentialism deems that moral motivation should be the nature of happiness, which means the moral agent should be driven by the consideration of happiness, in Mill's words "the desire, therefore, of that power which is necessary to render the persons and properties of human beings subservient to our pleasures, is the grand governing law of human nature".[37] Consequentialism understands happiness in a hedonistic way, as consisting in human pleasures.

In his Critique of Practical Reason, Kant writes that "instead of the concept of the good as an object determining and making possible the moral law, it is on the contrary the moral law that first determines and makes possible the concept of the good."[38] He also argues that an action does not have any moral worth if the action is triggered by motivation without any moral considerations, because this kind of action is driven by a human's inclinations.[39] However, from the perspective of the *Laozi* and Plato, Kant's argument is not convincing because Kant does not elucidate the reasons why the moral agent is willing to act correctly or to fulfil his/her duty, or to act in accordance with moral laws. Kant argues that action motivated by inclination does not have moral value because the motive to act has not gone through moral consideration. According to Kant, the morally right way to act ought to follow moral rules that have been captured by pure reason and abstracted into a universal principle, which derives the concept of good. However, in order to justify his argument

[36] Ibid.

[37] Mill, J., Macaulay, T., Lively, J., & Rees, J. (1984). *Utilitarian logic and politics : James Mill's 'Essay on government', Macaulay's critique and the ensuing debate*. Oxford: Clarendon.

[38] Kant, I., Guyer, P., & Wood, A. (1998). *Critique of pure reason* (Kant, Immanuel, 1724-1804. Works. English. 1992). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 64.

[39] Kant, I., Gregor, M., & Timmermann, J., 2013.

Kant presumes a premise that each moral agent is willing to follow their pure reasons and be principled. If there is no such thing as a higher authority to guide the moral agent, then how could it be possible that the moral agent possesses the will that motivates them to be principled?

The way that the *Laozi* inculcates a motivation to be moral in moral agents is to inform the final moral ends as a teleological motive for the moral agent.[40] That is to say, the final moral ends for the moral agent is to live in accordance with the *dao*, and in order to achieve this the moral agent needs to arrive in a mental state of having no desire 無欲 *wuyu*, because in this state the moral agent is capable of acting *wuwei* as I mentioned above, an argument I will fully develop in chapter 3. In brief, on the one hand, we can find that desires in the *Laozi* are necessary to motivate the moral agent to act; on the other, the moral motivation for moral agents should be perception and reflection possessed and processed by the said moral agent from the given context, because in this situation, the action is triggered not by innate desires, i.e. emotional and bodily desires, but rather by recognition of the given context and the evaluation and judgement of the appropriate reaction. [41] Similar to the *Laozi*, Plato indicates that moral motivations need to be distinguished and justified by the moral agent in the way of recognising the final moral ends. The final moral ends should be getting the soul of the moral agent well-ordered, and the rational soul should rule over the whole embodied human soul because the rational part of the embodied human soul cares for the benefit of the whole soul (the *Republic*

[40] Vasiliou, I. (2011). Aristotle, agents, and actions. In *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics: A Critical Guide*(pp. 170-190). Cambridge University Press. Vasiliou has distinguished between the efficient casual motive and the teleological motive in Aristotle.

[41] With regard to the distinction between emotional desires and bodily desires in the *Laozi*, and the relation between desires and *wuwei* 無為 I will give a fully argument in chapter 3. In brief, I argue that in the *Laozi*, there are two kinds of desires, emotional and bodily desires, the bodily desire pertains to the body that is merely associated with those desires for eating, drinking etc; whereas the emotional desire pertains to the heart 心 *xin* in the *Laozi*, that is associated with the sensual desires, or the desires for the exceeding goods.

441c).[42] Vasiliou argues that in the *Republic* Book 4, although reason makes the best decision for the whole human soul, sometimes the spirited and appetitive parts of the soul overrule reason's judgement.[43] It is true that all three parts of the embodied human soul can be the motivator of actions respectively, but the consideration of the action to be moral should be based, in my view of reading Plato, on the consideration of the final moral ends of the moral agent, which is to let the rational soul rule the whole embodied human soul so as to act virtuously for the benefit of the whole soul (see Chapter 3).

1.2 The Summary of Chapters

The first chapter serves the function of the preparation of the comparative ground. Not only will it reveal the double-sided mirror – the moral agent — for both the *Laozi* and Plato, but also will place the formation of the moral agent in the centre to be examined and compared. By 'the double-sided mirror as the morel agent', I mean that *via* scrutinising and comparing the notion of the moral agent between the *Laozi* and Plato, the following issues will be reflected and projected. First, the distinction of different kinds of good in the *Laozi* and Plato. The distinction sets out the criterion to determine whether or not these two systems can be paralleled for the comparison of the formation of the moral agent. It furthers the argument on the understanding of the highest good as the prerequisite for both to foster moral agents. Second, the process of the formation of the moral agent on each side will be explored and presented, which will establish the major differences on how these two philosophical systems treat knowledge. To wit, the sage and the philosopher in the *Laozi* and Plato respectively act as the role models for moral agents to emulate. However, given that the understanding of the highest good is the prerequisite for both to foster moral agents, the *Laozi* prescribes the moral agent to

[42] Vasiliou, I. (2016). *Moral motivation : A history* (Oxford philosophical concepts). New York, NY: Oxford University Press, p. 20. Vasiliou argues draws a distinction of the moral motivation in Plato that is "the acting virtuously is the motive in the teleological sense, while the well-being of my soul is the motive in the efficient causal sense."

[43] Ibid, p. 21.

abandon knowledge (知 *zhi*) and to live in accordance with the *dao*; whilst Plato advocates attainment of knowledge is the necessity for the moral agent to become philosopher. This difference denotes, despite the similarity of the macro philosophical approach – the understanding of the highest good – a radical difference in how it is achieved. The way of fostering moral agents in the respective systems are achieved in contrary ways.

The topic of the second chapter will be on the final moral ends. I suggest that we can find the paralleled understanding of the final ends and its related core notions, i.e. the *dao* and the soul in both the *Laozi* and Plato. Also, in this chapter, I will argue that there is a similarity in the linkage between the higher authorities, i.e. the *dao* and the cosmic soul, and the human reality between the *Laozi* and Plato, which I coin as “as if method”. Based on this method, we can find that both of the two philosophies reveal an approach to enrich the moral agent’s life, which is to achieve their final moral ends. Although the final moral ends in each philosophy appears different, i.e. in the *Laozi* the final moral end is to live in accordance with the *dao* and in Plato it is to become as godlike as possible, the objective to emulate the higher authorities which possess the highest good for the moral agent to attain is the same. In this chapter, I propose a new way of interpreting the *Laozi*. I suggest that the notion of the *dao* should be interpreted as a central notion for three layers of *Weltanschauungen*, i.e. the ideal level, the ideal-like level and the level of human reality. Each level corresponds and correlates to its own way of *dao*.

In the third chapter I will further the argument that the different approaches are associated with the treatment of knowledge, with Plato advocating a pursuit of knowledge and the *Laozi* advocating the opposite as the means to reach philosopher-king and sage-like status respectively. Despite the pursuit of knowledge being key in Plato and the absence of knowledge being key in the *Laozi*, the two both advocate the absence of desire as being key to reaching truly moral status. In Plato, the function of rationality is central to the moral agent becoming truly moral, whereas the absence of rationality and desires is central to the moral agent becoming truly moral in the *Laozi*. In the following

sections, I will present different kinds of desires in Plato and the *Laozi* to illustrate the different approaches of each; for Plato it is educating the moral agent to be rational, whereas for the *Laozi* it is the cultivation of the moral agent to minimise desires to only those that fulfil basic needs.

1.3 The Textual Issue of the *Laozi*

It is important to discuss the textual issues due to the variation of the characters and content appearing in the multiple transmitted and excavated versions of the *Laozi*. The *Laozi* was not transmitted in a unified version during the Warring States period, and accordingly different versions circulated in the Han dynasty as witnessed by the three excavated versions from the Western Han period, the *Mawangdui jia*, the *Mawangdui yi* and the *Beida* version, all of which are different. This complex situation makes authorship of the *Laozi* problematic and I therefore need to explain why I use the *Wang Bi* recension of the *Laozi*, recognized as the transmitted version, for my research instead of the *Guodian* version, the *Mawangdui jia* or *Mawangdui yi* versions or the *Beida* version.[44] It is first necessary to discuss the many versions of the *Laozi* and its commentaries starting from the *Hanfeizi* chapters "*Jie Lao*" 解老 and "*Yu Lao*" 喻老 in the pre-Qin period to modern day commentaries. It is supposed there are 27 versions of the *Laozi* and more than 3000 commentaries.[45] Nowadays, the transmitted version of the *Laozi* is divided into two books – the book of the *dao* and the book of the *de* – containing in total 81 chapters. Liu Xiaogan has compared and contrasted six versions of the *Laozi*, i.e. the *Guodian* version,

[44] Two silk manuscript versions of the *Laozi* were discovered in a tomb at *Mawangdui* in 1973. One of them has been dated back to 194—188 B.C. and the other to 195 B.C. They are not the oldest versions of the *Laozi* so far (as the bamboo strips version of *Laozi* that has been discovered in another tomb at *Guodian* in 1993 dated to ca 300 BCE is for now the oldest version of the text). Nevertheless, the core arguments of this thesis will not touch on the philological differences. Furthermore, for the sake of convenience of the reference, the chapter numbering and organisation of the received version of *Laozi* will be used in my thesis.

[45] *Gao Ming* 高明, (2015). *Boshu Laozi jiaozhu* 帛书老子校注, Beijing: *Zhonghua shuju* 中華书局, p. 1.

the two *Mawangdui* versions, the *Fuyi* version, the *Heshang Gong* version and the *Wang Bi* version.[46] From his book, it can be observed that apart from some characters having been amended due to the taboo of using the emperor's name, there are very few discrepancies among the versions of *Fuyi*, *Heshang Gong*, *Wang Bi* and the *Beida* version. However, there is considerable discrepancy among the versions of *Guodian*, *Mawangdui jia* and *Mawangdui yi* and the transmitted version. Firstly, the *Guodian* version is radically different from the transmitted version and the *Mawangdui* versions because it merely contains three bundles of bamboo strips that contain only 32 of the transmitted 81 chapters.[47] The silk manuscript versions of *Mawangdui jia* and *Mawangdui yi* versions and the transmitted version contain 81 chapters, but the *Mawangdui* versions reverse the sequence of the book of *dao* (chapters 1-37) and the book of *de* (chapters 38-81), while the transmitted version begins with the book of de followed by the book of *dao*. The different versions reveal distinctive treatment of the philosophy of the *Laozi*. For example, in the *Guodian* version, the *Laozi* more systematically accepts inevitable warfare than in the *Mawangdui* versions.[48] Thus, how in my research should I deal with the discrepancies among the different versions?

My solution is to mainly consider the transmitted version in my thesis, because my research is regarding the philosophy, and not the philology, of the *Laozi*. I

[46] Liu Xiaogan, (2006). *Laozi Gujin* 老子古今, Beijing: *Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe* 中国社会科学出版社.

[47] Peng Hao, (2000) "Post Excavation" Work on the Guodian Bamboo Slip Laozi: A Few Points of Explanation." Ed. in Allan, S., Williams, C., Laozi, & Society for the Study of Early China. (2000). *The Guodian Laozi: Proceedings of the international conference, Dartmouth College, May 1998* (Early China special monograph series; no.5). Berkeley: Society for the Study of Early China and Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 33-38. Within these chapters, some of them are, compared with the transmitted version, merely part of transmitted chapter units, one chapters is repeated in different bundles, for example, chapter 64 appears in both bundle A and C.

[48] Dan Murphy, (2006) "A comparison of the *Guodian* and *Mawangdui Laozi* texts", University of Massachusetts Amherst, p. 56.

agree that the discrepancies among different versions of the *Laozi* might impact the interpretation of each version, which will possibly reveal different philosophical ideas, such as the example of the warfare between the *Guodian* and *Mawangdui* versions. However, I believe that the transmitted version contains a coherent and consistent conception and philosophy, because the historical commentaries, such as Heshang Gong and Wang Bi, treated the text of the *Laozi* as a coherent whole when they were constructed as my thesis will demonstrate. For example, I will argue that there are three layers of the notion of the *dao* and other concepts related to the *dao* in the second and third chapters. Thirdly, it is not the task of this thesis to distinguish the philological issues in the various interpretations of the *Laozi*. The issue of the identity of the *Laozi* is complex; for example the *Guodian* version has a number of issues: A. scholars like Peng Hao and Qiu Xigui claim that the writing styles are different among the three bundles of bamboo strips.[49] B. there is another text *Taiyishengshui* 太一生水[50] grouped together with the *Laozi* that derives questions regarding the text of the *Guodian* version. What is the unity of the *Guodian* version of the *Laozi* and how should we read or treat the *Guodian* version with the transmitted version? What is the relationship between the *Taiyishengshui* 太一生水 and the *Laozi*, and was *Taiyishengshui* 太一生水 part of the *Laozi*? We can see that some content in the *Guodian* version is closer to the *Mawangdui* versions, and some is closer to the transmitted version, however, it is difficult to conclude there are certain corresponding relationships

[49] Xing Wen 邢文, (2005), *Guodian Laozi yu Taiyishengshui* 郭店老子与太一生水, *Xueyuan Chubanshe* 学苑出版社, P. 201.

[50] Sarah Allan argues that the *Taiyishengshui* 太一生水 has a strong connection with the text of the *Laozi* in terms of the semantics, and also she argues the *Taiyishengshui* 太一生水 can provide some help for the interpretation of some philosophic conceptions in the text of the *Laozi*. (Xing Wen 邢文, (2005), *Guodian Laozi yu Taiyishengshui* 郭店老子与太一生水, *Xueyuan Chubanshe* 学苑出版社, p. 203)

between the *Guodian* version and the transmitted version, although it is certain that the *Guodian* version is one of the sources for the transmitted version.

For similar reasons I do not use the *Mawangdui Jia* and *Manwangdui Yi* versions. Firstly we have to distinguish between the two versions, because: A. analysis of the writing styles and content (for example, the loaning words to change 邦 *bang* translated as states being taboo in any text, because it is the same character as that of the emperor's name Liu Bang 刘邦 [206 –194 B.C.E.]), suggest they were produced in a different time period.[51] B. more importantly, according to Gao Ming, the grammar is different in each, and he argues that they are derived from two different primary sources.[52] Secondly, the original excavated versions of the *Mawangdui* manuscripts are missing considerable amounts of content, the *Mawangdui jia* version is missing 1306 characters and the *Mawangdui yi* version is missing 645 characters.[53] It is also important to note the accessibility of the English translations of the *Laozi*, most of which are from the transmitted version, which is the reason why using the transmitted version of the *Laozi* for my thesis will make my analysis easier to follow compared to the *Beida* version.

Based on these textual issues, I will focus on the transmitted version of the *Laozi*, because it is the most complete and most widely used by scholars. If it is felt that the philological study of the different versions will impact the philosophic interpretations then a study of other versions should be undertaken, particularly the variants and lacunae of the *Guodian* version.

[51] *Gao Ming* 高明, (2015). *Boshu Laozi jiaozhu* 帛书老子校注, Beijing: *Zhonghua shuju* 中華书局 ,5-6; Henricks, R. (1989). *Lao-tzu : Te-tao ching [sic] : A new translation based on the recently discovered Ma-wang-tui texts* (1st ed.). London: Rider, introduction. Henricks mentions that Mawangdui Jia uses the "small seal" form writing and Yi version uses more modern "clerical" form to copy these two versions.

[52] *Gao Ming* 高明, (2015)., Introduction.

[53] Ibid, introduction and pp. 429-465.

However, I do not believe the existing variants undermine my findings that have been built upon the interpretation of the transmitted version of the *Laozi*.

Chapter 1 Formation of the Moral Agent in Plato and the *Laozi*

1.1 Introduction

This chapter compares how Plato and the *Laozi* treat the concept of the moral agent and will show the discrepancy of their approaches with that of consequentialism. In consequentialism the morality of an action is based on the outcome, which is contrary to the teachings of Plato and the *Laozi*. This chapter investigates how Plato and the *Laozi* derive the moral value of an action from the intention of the moral agent, rather than solely the outcome.

Since the Enlightenment, moral theories have changed from agent-centred theory to act-centred theory, focusing on the dissection of the morality of action and duty rather than on the morality of the agent and character.[54] This change along with the use of homonymous terms, such as 'virtuous' complicate discussions regarding the moral agent. As Everson notes, 'an agent is virtuous' and 'an action is virtuous' require clarification because they do not have the same meaning, [55] which is to say that the criteria of an agent being virtuous is distinct that of an action being virtuous. An agent being virtuous requires a lifelong commitment to living virtuously, whereas a virtuous action can be achieved by any individual regardless of whether they are a virtuous agent or not. Furthermore, whilst there is certainly a connection between the concept of moral agent and that of moral actions, it is debatable whether act-centered theories or agent-centered theories, should hold the predominant position.

As I noted in the introduction, virtue ethics has roots in ancient philosophy and holds the viewpoint that the formation of the moral agent should prevail over

[54] Harris, G. (1999). *Agent-centered morality: An Aristotelian alternative to Kantian internalism.* Berkeley ; London: University of California Press, p. 2.

[55] Everson, S. (2011). Justice and just action in Plato's Republic. In /Episteme, etc./ (p. Episteme, etc., Chapter 12). Oxford University Press, p. 249.

the judgement of actions. Thus, it is necessary to consider how a comparison of the *Laozi* and Plato through the lens of the moral agent can offer insight into why 'good' character prevails over 'right' action in determining whether or not an action is moral. In this chapter, I will explore, examine and compare the formation of the moral agent, i.e. the philosopher in Plato, and the sage as the exemplary moral agent in the *Laozi*. In so doing I aim to defend the argument that the character of the moral agent is key in guaranteeing the good of an action, since the deliberation is derived from the disposition of the moral agent. Furthermore, by scrutinising the formation of moral agents in Plato and the *Laozi* I will demonstrate why agent-centred theory prevails over consequentialism.[56]

1.2 The Distinction of Goodness in Plato and the *Laozi*

In this section, I will clarify the distinction of goodness in Plato and the *Laozi* for two reasons. Firstly, the distinction of goodness provides the normative standards for the formation of the moral agent in both Plato and the *Laozi*. Understanding this will facilitate the discussion on how each undertake forming the moral agent, which is the main point of this chapter. Secondly, Plato and the *Laozi* both contemplate and examine consequentialist viewpoints, with the conclusion that goodness should prevail over consequentialist viewpoints. While scholars, such as Annas and Pappas,[57] discuss Plato's consequentialist viewpoints, there has been no similar discussion relating to the *Laozi*. By method of comparison, I open up a new horizon to interpret the *Laozi*.

[56] Agent-centred theory is concerned with who I should be rather than what I should do. It takes account of the notion of good characters rather than the notion of right actions. (Hursthouse, R. (1998). Normative Virtue Ethics. In How Should One Live?: Essays on the Virtues. : Oxford University Press, p.20.)

[57] I will discuss their ideas in the following section at length.

1.2.1 The Distinction of Goodness in Plato

Plato explicitly elaborates on three kinds of goodness in the *Republic* 357 b-d, in order to establish which kind of justice is applicable. By demonstrating and discriminating between these three kinds of goodness, Plato establishes a hierarchy of normative orientations for the moral agent to pursue. Since I will discuss the passage in detail, I will quote it at length:

"Tell me, do you think there is a kind of good we welcome, not because we desire what comes from it, but because we welcome it for its own sake – joy, for example, and all the harmless pleasures that have no results beyond the joy of having them?... and is there a kind of good we like for its own sake and also for the sake of what comes from it – knowing, for example, and seeing and being healthy? We welcome such things, I suppose, on both counts. … and do you also see a third kind of good, such as physical training, medical treatment when sick, medicine itself, and the other ways of making money? We'd say that these are onerous but beneficial to us, and we wouldn't choose them for their own sake, but for the sake of the rewards and other things that come from them."[58]

The first kind of goodness is goodness in itself; The second kind is goodness in itself *and* for its consequences; and the third kind is goodness for its consequences only.[59] Socrates believed that the second kind of goodness, which is considered as justice, was the most important, as he notes "I myself put (the justice) among the finest goodness, as something to be valued by anyone who is going to be blessed with happiness, both because of itself and because of what comes from it" [60] (the *Republic* 357d-358a). However, Glaucon argues against Socrates, considering that "justice belongs to onerous

[58] Cooper, J., & Hutchinson, D. (1997). *Complete works*. Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing, p.998-9.

[59] Pappas, N. (1995). /Plato and the Republic/ (Routledge philosophy guidebooks). London: Routledge pp. 52-53. Pappas lists them as discusses how these three kinds of good relates to the cotemporary moral theories.

[60] Cooper, J., & Hutchinson, D. (1997). *Complete works*. Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing, p.999.

kind, and is to be practiced for the sake of the rewards and popularity that come from a reputation for justice, but is to be avoided because of itself as something burdensome"[61] (*Republic* 358a). Furthermore, Glaucon offers three arguments to articulate that justice is the least desirable of the three kinds of goodness. His first argument on the nature and origin of justice is much akin to Hobbes' theory of the social contract,[62] where the rules of justice correspond to the moral agent's interests in society, in which the moral agent neither does unjust action nor is harmed by unjust action (*Republic* 359 a-b). His second argument is that the moral agent acts justly for fear of the consequences of acting unjustly although, if they could act unjustly without punishment, as in the story of Gyges' ring, they would (*Republic* 359c-360d). His third argument is that a life of injustice is better than a life of justice (*Republic* 350d-362a).

In the passage, having evaluated three kinds of goodness and established a normative hierarchy, Plato, as Annas notes, attempts to offer an alternative to moral theories that has some similarities to virtue ethics.[63] He endeavours to show that a right action can be derived from good – virtues like embracing good for its own sake, and the right action resulting in good consequences. Nevertheless, virtue ethics indicates, according to Hursthouse, that "an action is right if it is what an X[64] agent would characteristically do in the circumstances, and an X agent is one who has and exercises certain character traits, namely the Xs."[65] Hursthouse agrees with Plato that the moral agent is

[61] Ibid, p. 999.

[62] I do not intend to argue for or against this point about the social contract, but merely mention that Glaucon's ideal on the nature and origin of justice shares similarities with Hobbes' social contract in terms of the justice/ social norms that comes out from the agreements formulated by people's interests for Plato/ the transferring their rights for Hobbes. (Hobbes, T., & Tuck, R. (1996). *Leviathan* (Revised student edition / edited by Richard Tuck.. ed., Cambridge texts in the history of political thought). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.)

[63] Annas, J. (1981). An introduction to Plato's Republic. Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 61.

[64] X denotes a virtuous trait.

[65] Hursthouse, R., (1999). On virtue ethics, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 29.

the criterion of justifying the action that is right or not. However, Hursthouse's stance predominately descends from Aristotelian thinking that, albeit agreeing with Plato that virtues are crucial to a flourishing life, the attainment of virtues is not acquired by understanding of the goodness as Plato advocates, rather it is acquired by learning and understanding through proper education and habits. Plato believes that the understanding of the goodness is a prerequisite of living a wholesome life. That is why Plato articulates on the distinction of goodness in this passage. Plato revealingly did not elaborate the first kind of goodness because he considers goodness in itself to be comparatively trivial.[66] However, we can find that Socrates thinks that justice is good, because it is good for its own sake and for its consequence.[67] However, if justice is good merely for its consequences, then it takes the consequentialist stance, which Socrates argues against. Justice is merely an approach to govern the states and its people and that without punishment a life of injustice will be better than a life of justice.

In terms of the distinction of goodness, Julia Annas suggests that Platonic ethics in the *Republic* are a genuine alternative to deontology and consequentialism. Firstly, she believes that Plato would consider the first kind of goodness to be trivial, compared to the other two; and secondly that considering the first kind of goodness as a deontological assumption is a misunderstanding of the *Republic*, because Plato does not attempt to discuss moral duty or obligation. Annas credits the third kind of goodness to consequentialism, arguing that, although contemporary deontology and consequentialism are more revisionary and modified versions than Plato's argument in the *Republic*, Plato provides a recognizable moral judgment to demonstrate virtue/justice is good both in itself *and* its consequences.[68] However, G.R.F. Ferrari thinks it is unnecessary to evaluate the argument of

[66] Annas, J. (1981). An introduction to Plato's Republic. Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 61.

[67] Pappas, N. (1995). Plato and the Republic (Routledge philosophy guidebooks). London: Routledge p.52.

[68] Annas, J. (1981). An introduction to Plato's Republic. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 61-64.

the distinction of goodness in the *Republic* 359a-b, because he thinks that if this distinction is important, Plato would have Socrates say it rather than Glaucon. Ferrari instead believes that the distinction between the means and the ends that we pursue in *Lysis* 220 a-b, *Gorgias* 467c, and the divided goodness of the soul separated from the bodily and social goodness in *Apology* 29d, *Phaedo* 68c, *Laws* 697b are the more important moral concerns for Plato.[69]

The nature of the contrasting views between Ferrari and Annas over this passage raises two questions. First, whether or not it is necessary to evaluate Plato's passage from the perspective of contemporary moral theory? Second, who should be the proper protagonist in Platonic dialogues to reveal Plato's authentic ideas?

Understanding Plato's dialogues and the writing of the *Laozi* and comparing them with contemporary moral theory demonstrates how philosophical discussions in ancient texts can inaugurate new discussion. In terms of interpreting the passage, I disagree with Ferrari that any important argument would be raised by Socrates in Plato's dialogue. I argue that Plato uses all his interlocutors to develop arguments that could not be raised by an individual alone, even Socrates. For example, by employing Glaucon to raise the distinction of goodness, Plato is then able to use Socrates to argue against Glaucon's classification of justice as a consequentialist assumption and go on to prove how justice is both good in itself and has good consequences. Plato's back and forth dialogues between interlocutors are a means to elaborate and elucidate an argument. That is to say, not all of the philosophic arguments or important concepts have to be delivered from the mouth of Socrates. For example, it is unwise to neglect that the momentous speeches regarding the creation of the cosmos in the *Timaeus*, are not delivered by Socrates but by Timaeus.

[69] Ferrari, G. (2003). City and soul in Plato's Republic (Lecturae Platonis ; v. 2). Sankt Augustin [Germany]: Academia Verlag, p. 16.

I have set out the discussion on the comparison of moral agents between the *Laozi* and Plato with the distinction of goodness in the *Laozi* and Plato. In this section, I have noted the three kinds of goodness revealed in Plato's *Republic*. Having listed them, Plato sets up a hierarchy of normative orientations that the moral agent should follow. The highest goodness is to acquire virtues that contain good for their own sake and achieve the best consequences.

1.2.2 The Distinction of Goodness in the *Laozi*

Chapter 2 of the *Laozi*, shows that once a concept is created, then its oppositional pair is simultaneously created, which seemingly goes against my idea of distinguishing goodness in the *Laozi*.[70] The *Laozi* believes that the moral agent should renounce the distinction of concepts, social values and moral values in chapter 19, but at the same time advocates living as much in accordance with the *dao* as possible.[71] To live in accordance with the *dao*

[70] 天下皆知美之為美，斯惡已。皆知善之為善，斯不善已。故有無相生，難易相成，長短相較，高下相傾，音聲相和，前後相隨。是以聖人處無為之事，行不言之教；萬物作焉而不辭，生而不有。為而不恃，功成而弗居。夫唯弗居，是以不去。Everyone in human society knows what beauty is; doing this they have ugliness; Everyone in human society knows what good is, doing this they have the opposite of good. Thus, having and not-having mutually generate each other difficulty and easiness mutually produce each other, length and shortness mutually compare each other, height and lowness mutually raises each other, notes and tones mutually harmonises each other, before and behind mutually follows each other. That is why the sage does the affairs of *wuwei* and does wordless teaching; ten thousand things spring up and they do not decline to display themselves; she produces but does not claim ownership. She acts but does not expect anything, she completes the deeds but does not take the credits. (I translated all of the *Laozi* by myself with drawing lessons from James Legge's translation in the website of ctext.org in this thesis hereafter)

[71] Chapter 19 絕聖棄智，民利百倍;絕仁棄義，民復孝慈;絕巧棄利，盜賊無有。此三者以為文不足。故令有所屬:見素抱樸，少私寡欲。To cut off sagelines and give up the wisdom, the people would be benefited a hundredfold; to cut off benevolence and give up justice, the people would go back to filiality and parental affection; to cut off cleverness and give up benefits, thieves would be gone. These three things are not sufficient for noting down.

means the moral agent must pursue and attain the highest goodness possible, which is contrary to renouncing the distinction of concepts, social values and moral values. Thus, the *Laozi* advocates that the distinction of concepts should not be discerned. Furthermore, and unlike Plato, the explicit elucidation of the distinction of 'goodness' is not presented in the *Laozi*. Thus, it is necessary to defend the point that there is the distinction of goodness in the *Laozi* in the first place.

The *Laozi* suggests that mankind, like all other entities, lives as a part of the cosmos regulated by the *dao,* which is considered as order (*zhi* 治).[72] The term *zhi* 治 appears thirteen times in the *Laozi* and has two senses; most commonly *zhi* is used as a verb meaning, "to regulate or to govern",[73] and less commonly as a noun, meaning "order or regulation".[74] In both cases the notion of order *zhi* indicates a harmonious human society that is regulated by the sage acting in accordance with the *dao*. As chapter 17 notes, the *order* of society is regulated directly by the sage or by the sage making the masses (*baixing* 百姓) think that they regulate themselves.[75] Furthermore, according to chapter 25, we can see that there is nothing special about mankind to distinguish it from other entities, since mankind, which possesses the same order of the *dao* as others, is just one segment of the cosmos.[76] However, when *zhi* is used as a verb, it denotes a regulation of something that is placed in accordance with their thinking or desires. In this case, human beings are special to the *Laozi*, because they possess the capability of awareness (知 *zhi*) of objects, an ability

Thus, to order them to have belonged: to display the pureness and to hold the simplicity, to lessen your concern to yourself and reduce the desires.

[72] Chapter 62 The *dao* is that toward which all things flow. 道者萬物之注也。

[73] Chapters 3, 8, 10, 57, 50, 60, 65, 75

[74] Chapter 3, 64

[75] Chapter 17 *people are all said that "we are all as we are of ourselves*. 百姓皆曰："我自然。"

[76] Chapter 25 人法地，地法天，天法道，道法自然。"*human is emulated the Earth, the Earth is emulated the Heaven, the Heaven is emulated the dao, the dao is acting as itself*."

to distinguish concepts and values and have the dispositions and desires (欲 *yu*) of pursuing them.[77] Compared to other entities, the awareness (知 *zhi*), and ability to distinguish concepts and values and have the dispositions and desires (欲 *yu*) gives human beings the potential and possibility to overcome the obstacle of attaining the *dao* and to live accordingly.[78]

In addition to the paradox that moral agents should drop the distinctions of concepts and their values, and yet pursue and attain the highest moral value, some good-related concepts encapsulating conventional desirable values are demonstrated in the *Laozi*, such as non-defeat success/triumph (無败 *wubai*/ 勝 *sheng*), strength (強 *qiang*), richness (富 *fu*), intentions (有志 *youzhi*), longevity (壽 *shou*), sweetness (甘 *gan*), beauty (美 *mei*), stability (安 *an*), and happiness (樂 *le*). The *Laozi* recognises that people would pursue these conventional social and moral values, and, on the one hand, employs them as selling points to describe the advantage of acting *wuwei* and living in accordance with the *dao,*[79] and on the other hand, argues that people should not distinguish concepts or pursue conventional values.[80] This requires accounts of the features of the *dao* that should be emulated by moral agents. The *dao* is ever-lasting (久 *jiu*), although the *Laozi* does not explicitly articulate that ever-lasting can be emulated by the moral agent, but it certainly makes it the most important feature of the *dao*.[81] *Jiu* 久 (ever-lasting) is the key feature of the *dao* in the *Laozi*, and the principles of the *dao* include staying with the

[77] Chapter 3, 28.

[78] Moeller, H. (2006). *The Philosophy of the Daodejing*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp.70-89.

[79] Chapter 3, 33, 55, 76. For example, in chapter 33, 知人者智，自知者明。勝人者有力，自勝者強。*He who knows other men is discerning; he who knows himself is intelligent; He who overcomes others is strong; he who overcomes himself is mighty*.

[80] Chapter 2. In this chapter, as I have mentioned above, the distinction of concepts should be stopped.

[81] In chapter 16, 久 *jiu* is the most important feature which prevails over other features of the *dao*.

weakness (守弱 *shouruo*) or moving towards the opposites (反 *fan*) exist for the achievement of eternity (久 *jiu*). For eternity, the related vocabulary includes "not to die" 不死 *busi*[82] and "no perishing" 不亡 *buwang*[83]. The *Laozi* notes that "not to die" (不死) is the manifestation of the mode of eternity.[84] Furthermore, the exemplary ideal figure, the sage, lives in accordance with the *dao* and acts *wuwei*.[85] The active promotion of being *wuwei* by means of displaying good consequences of acting *wuwei* can be taken as a way of the *Laozi* to make distinctions between desirable or undesirable values, because the *Laozi* appeals for moral agents to act *wuwei* so as to achieve good or desirable consequences and values.

However, this actually goes against one of its own traits — being detached from objects and values. Being detached from objects and values removes impediments from the sage while making decisions. According to the *Laozi* in chapter 46, "no fault would be greater than the desire of gaining 欲得 *yude*".[86] The *Laozi* uses "no fault would be greater" to emphasise the fault that the moral agent could make. If we follow my argument regarding the contradiction that the *Laozi* creates, by pointing out what the moral agent should not do, the *Laozi* implies what is the right thing to do.

The distinction of concepts is done only in the realm of human society, because the entities that follow the *dao* treat everything equally without preferences, which are invoked by the distinction of concepts, as chapter 5 notes, "*Heaven and earth do not act from the impulse of any wish to be benevolent; they deal with all things as the dogs of grass are dealt with*."[87] Nevertheless, it is

[82] Chapter 6, 50

[83] Chapter 33

[84] Moeller, H. (2006), P.121. Moeller has a discussion in his book that death emphasises the being of the existence.

[85] Chapter 2, 57.

[86] Chapter 46, 咎大莫过于欲得。

[87] Chapter 5 天地不仁，以萬物為芻狗。

intriguing to note that as a means of prescribing the values of the sage and the *dao*, the *Laozi* employs the conventional good-related concepts and values. For example, common sense tells us that winning or prevailing over is a good-related concept. People attain many advantages by defeating enemies in battles, so prevailing over (勝 *sheng)* rather than defeat (敗 *bai)* is a more desirable outcome. This oppositional pair *sheng* and *bai* represent the contrasting values between strength and weakness. In chapter 45, the *Laozi* states that "*constant action overcomes cold; being still overcomes heat*."[88] And in chapter 61, "*the female always prevails over the male by her stillness. Stillness is considered as abasement*".[89] As we can see, like the oppositional pair *sheng* and *bai*, the pairs of terms like *cold* and *heat*, *male* and *female* are all exemplified in the *Laozi* as the contrasting values of strength and weakness. By showing that weakness overcomes strength, the *Laozi* advocates that staying with the weakness 守弱 *shouruo* is one of the *dao's* features that the moral agent should obey. The *Laozi* is saying that social values in human society can be used to help validate the moral value of *wuwei,* as articulated in chapter 57 "thus the sage says that I act *wuwei*, then the ruled will be transformed of themselves; I am fond of keeping still, then the ruled will correct themselves. I do not arise any unnecessary business, then the ruled will enrich themselves; I do not have any desires, then the ruled will attain themselves to get the primitive simplicity".[90]

To this point, I have explained that the distinction of the concepts does not rule out advocating the good of the *dao*, *wuwei* and the sage in human society. Hereafter, I proffer that we can find two kinds of goodness in the *Laozi*. The first kind of goodness is *wuwei* that is conducted by the *dao* or by the one who can possess the *dao* such as the sage; and the second goodness is merely for

[88] Chapter45 躁勝寒靜勝熱

[89] Chapter 61 牝常以靜勝牡，以靜為下

[90] Chapter 57 故聖人云：我無為，而民自化；我好靜，而民自正；我無事，而民自富；我無欲，而民自樸。

desirable consequences. Unlike Plato who explicitly articulates justice is good for its own sake, the *Laozi* does not explicitly elucidate that *wuwei* is good in itself. Moreover, the complication of interpreting the exact meaning of *wuwei* is because we can find that different correlations are displayed in the *Laozi,* such as *wuwei* and *dao*; *wuwei* and the sage. Finally, the difference of the interpretations of *wuwei* is manifested by the consequences of conducts of the *dao*, the *de* and the sage acting *wuwei*.

In the *Laozi*, the first kind of the goodness that can be interpreted as *wuwei* is that conducted by the *dao* or by the exemplary figure – the sage. *Wuwei*, as one of the most important concepts in the *Laozi*, denotes a mode of conduct that is performed by the agency (in the *Laozi* it can be the *dao* 道, the *de* 德,[91] and the sage 聖人) who possesses the *dao* or could live in accordance with the *dao*. The mode of conduct indicates that the agency is able to be in the self-functioning status that enables them to act spontaneously. As one of the traits of the *dao*, acting spontaneously, not only reveals that the *dao* conducts *wuwei*, but also indicates that the *dao* is the totality of the cosmos in being able to function in accordance with its own principles. Chapter 25 notes that the *dao* is so-like-itself.[92] Scholars like Karyn Lai thinks there is a connection between *ziran* and *wuwei*, as she argues that *ziran* entails *wuwei* and these two

[91] The interpretation of the *de* in the *Laozi* is complex like that of the *dao*. Some scholars like D.C. Lau claim that "in the *Lao tzu* the term *de* is not a particularly important one and is often used in its more conventional sense. Lau, D. (1963). *Tao te ching* (Penguin classics). Harmondsworth; /New York: Penguin Books, p. 42." Some scholars, such as Chan 1963, Waley 1958 and Kaltenmark, interpret it as a kind of intrinsic power of the individual, which "makes the *de* have meanings ranging from magical potency to moral virtue." (Kaltenmark, M. (1969). *Lao Tzu and Taoism*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, p. 28;) I am sympathetic to Kaltenmark's interpretation of the *de* since the *de* in the *Laozi* does not necessarily reveal a meaning with a moral value, it also possesses a metaphysical meaning revealing that the *de* can be the possessor and nourisher of every creature (chapter 51), and yet, like he mentions, the *de* is always used in the *Laozi* in a good sense.

[92] Chapter 25 道法自然

concepts are woven together to give the conception of spontaneity in the *Laozi* an important philosophical and ethical sense.[93] I agree with Lai that the concept of *ziran* and *wuwei* in the *Laozi* are correlated, but I don't think that *ziran* necessarily entails *wuwei*. For example in chapter 17, the masses all mistakenly claim that "I am so-myself" (*wo ziran* 我自然) when in fact it is the ruler who completes the affairs on behalf of the ruled. "I am so myself" indicates the masses are in a state where they are aware of themselves but being in the state of *ziran* does not necessarily mean they perform *wuwei* in their daily activities.

Whilst there is no explicit elucidation of *wuwei* as the one that possesses goodness in itself and for its consequences, the *Laozi* rather implicitly presents *wuwei* in different layers of meanings that can be gathered, classified and interpreted. In the same way terms like 'consequentialism' are not used in the *Laozi*, however the thinking of 'consequentialism' can be found as well as the reasoning behind it. As Li notes, there is no notion of rationality in the *Zhuangzi*, however it does not rule out finding philosophical discussions regarding the topics of rationality and related clusters of ideas.[94] As aforementioned, *wuwei* in the *Laozi* is the conduct of the *dao*. In the *Laozi*, for moral agents the highest good is to live in accordance with the *dao,* thus *wuwei* is the first kind of good.

Furthermore, it follows that acting *wuwei* is the ideal and points to the idea that it is (entirely done by and of itself and not through any other means *wuyiwei* 無以為). The *Laozi* clearly elaborates that the *dao* (chapter 37) and the *de* (chapter 38), as agencies, are at all times in the mode of *wuwei.* The sage can sometimes be in the mode of *wuwei*,(chapters 57,64) and sometimes acts *wuwei,* (chapters 2,3,63) whereas an individual in the form of "I" (吾 *wu,*

[93] Lai, K. (2007). *Ziran* and *Wuwei* in the *Daodejing*: An Ethical Assessment. Dao, 6 (4), 325-337, p.326.

[94] Li, X.A., 2017. *Comparative encounters between Artaud, Michaux and the Zhuangzi : rationality, cosmology and ethics* First., London: Taylor and Francis, pp. 27-34.

chapter 43) is merely aware of (知 *zhi*) the benefits (有益) of *wuwei* (chapter 43). The consequence of the *dao* being in the mode of *wuwei* is that nothing cannot be done 無不爲 (chapter 37); The consequence of the *de* being in the mode of *wuwei* is the idea that something is entirely done by and of itself and not through any other means 無以為 (chapter 38). The consequence of the sage being in the mode of *wuwei* is for the ruled to be governed (nothing cannot be governed 無不治 *wubuzhi* chapter 3) and that the sage acting *wuwei* results in non-defeat (無败 *wubai* chapter 57). Lastly the consequence for "I" (吾 *wu*) is that an individual can merely be aware of the benefits of *wuwei*, which are rarely attained by anyone but the sage (chapter 43). Even though the achieved consequences of the *dao* acting *wuwei* are superior than that of the *de* and the sage, it does not mean that the *de* and the sage are not important in the *Laozi*.

The *Laozi* provides a crucial term (有益) that can be considered to denote consequences, to which we should pay particular analytical attention.

Chapter 43

"天下之至柔，馳騁天下之至堅。無有入無間，吾是以知無為之有益。不言之教，無為之益，天下希及之。

The softest thing in the world dashes against and overcomes the hardest; that which has no form enters where there is no crevice. I know hereby what advantage belongs to doing nothing (with a purpose). There are few in the world who attain to the teaching without words, and the advantage arising from non-action." [95]

To consider consequentialism as providing a decision making procedure for the moral agent is to expect that the moral theory offers a criterion to the moral

[95] I consider the James Legg's translation on this chapter and with some little changes on it.

agent to judge if an action is right.[96] In the *Laozi*, the best consequences are related to the higher authorities, such as the *dao* of the heaven (*tiandao* 天道). For example, to be good at winning (善胜 *shansheng*) is the best consequence in the *Laozi*. In chapter 73, this is displayed as the consequence of the characteristics of the higher authority, the *dao* of heaven (天之道 *tian zhi dao*); or defeat as the antithesis of winning is articulated as an undesirable result. The *Laozi* explicitly shows in chapter 29 that one would be defeated, if they are actively doing or interfering with something (為者敗之 *weizhe baizhi*). For good unrelated with the higher authority, the *Laozi* just considers the consequences of the action, which can be considered as a consequentialist moral view. [97]

Thus far I have distinguished two kinds of goodness in the *Laozi*, *viz*, the highest good is the *dao* and the *de* being *wuwei* and the one who can possess the *dao* and act *wuwei* such as the sage; and the second good is merely for the consequences of the good. I will show, as my analysis of Plato showed, how this distinction of the good is important in the formation of the moral agent, and how in the *Laozi* I find that merely considering the results of *wuwei* for the moral agent is insufficient to become a sage or sage-like. The moral agent should possess the *dao* and act accordingly in order to have good in itself and for its consequences.

Having depicted the different types of good in Plato and the *Laozi*, I draw the conclusion that both have identified different kinds of good, albeit with some similarities. While Plato distinguished three kinds of good, the *Laozi*

[96] Bales, R. (1971). Act-Utilitarianism: Account of Right-Making Characteristics or Decision-Making Procedure? *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 8(3), 257-265, p.261. According to R. Eugene Bales, there is a distinction in the consequentialist ethical views between providing "an account of right-making characteristics" and "a decision-making procedure".

[97] The same method has been applied by the paper: Im, M. (2011-10-04). Mencius as Consequentialist. In Ethics in Early China: An Anthology. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

distinguished only two, with good in itself not discussed. At the same time Plato placed more emphasis on the comparison between the good in itself *and* for its consequences and the good merely for its consequences, which are the two types of good found in the *Laozi*. In Plato the distinction of goodness is articulated explicitly with Plato clearly demonstrating the reflection of some contemporary moral views. However, while the *Laozi* does not demonstrate the distinction of goodness explicitly, the comparison between them can be interpreted from the text, as I have done above. In the next section, I will show how Plato and the *Laozi* argue that, *via* the formation of the moral agent, the good in itself, *as well as* for its consequences, is more important than the good *only* for its consequences.

1.3 The Formation of the Moral Agent in Plato and the *Laozi*

Having shown the distinctions of goodness in the *Laozi* and Plato respectively, I find that both set out a hierarchy of good for moral agents to pursue. The purpose of establishing the distinction of goodness in these two philosophical systems is to understand the formation of moral agents. In this section, I will show that they use exemplary figures -- the sage for the *Laozi* and the philosopher for Plato, as models for becoming a moral agent.

In the formation of a moral agent, there are some steps that need to be considered, such as how to shape the way the moral agent deliberates things, and how to help the moral agent understand good and treat it as a moral goal to pursue. How a moral agent deliberates things varies according to which action they decide to perform in any given situation. It is not merely systematic, such as becoming a virtuous agent, or following the moral rules, or calculating the maximised happiness. It is also based on what Hauerwas calls the vision of the moral agent with Hauerwas arguing that "moral behaviour is an affair not primarily of choice but of vision".[98] When facing a situation where the moral

[98] Hauerwas, S. (1981). *Vision and virtue : Essays in Christian ethical reflection*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, p.34

agent is required to perform an action accordingly or refuse to act, the moral agent first perceives the situation, then rationalizes and understands it, and finally makes a decision based on their understanding of the situation. The action performed by the moral agent is based on the perception, reasoning and understanding of the situation. The action that is performed varies from situation to situation based on the moral agent's deliberations.

John Stuart Mill argues that "it is a misapprehension of the utilitarian mode of thought, to conceive it as implying people should fix their minds upon so wide a generality as world, or society at large. … the multiplication of the happiness is, according to the utilitarian ethics, the object of virtue: the occasions on which any person (except one in a thousand) has it in his power to do this on an extended scale, in other words, to be a public benefactor, are but exceptional; and on these occasions alone is he called on to consider public utility; in every other case, private utility in the interest or happiness of some few persons, is all he has to attend to."[99]

John Stuart Mill admits that in most cases the moral agent needs only to consider their own benefits or happiness. However, it is also necessary to consider their actions, since these impact other people. The moral agent should at least have an idea of if they are what Mill considers to be the "one in a thousand"; what if they are the important one who should consider their action on a larger scale, but do not consider themself as being important? Secondly, decision making requires the moral agent's *own* understanding of the external world. Facing the external world, the moral agent implements their actions based on deliberations including their understanding of the situation and their attitude and standpoint regarding involvement in the situation. All should be considered as factors in the process of decision making. It is therefore necessary to show how the moral agent should be cultivated or educated to best deliberate those factors, and in the next section I will show how moral agents are formed in the *Laozi* and Plato.

[99] Mill, J. (2009). *Utilitarianism*. Auckland, New Zealand]: The Floating Press, pp.33-4.

1.3.1 The Formation of the Moral Agent in the *Laozi*

As explained in the introduction, I argue that the moral agent in the *Laozi* can be categorised in both a socio-political and a philosophical sense, although the two are interconnected. Before addressing the formation of the moral agent in the *Laozi*, it is necessary to consider what kind of moral agent is mentioned and discussed in the *Laozi*. In the philosophical sense, the moral agent could be the sage and non-sage (I name all moral agents other than the sage as non-sage to enable easier comparison between Plato's idea of philosopher and non-philosopher). In the *Laozi* moral agents could be rulers within the socio-political system, such as kings and dukes 王公 *wanggong* (chapter 42), nobles and kings 侯王 *houwang* (chapter 39), officers and heads 官长 *guanzhang (*chapter 28), generals and armies 将军 *jiangjun* (chapter 31), and generic rulers (chapter 30).[100] At this point, it is vital to clarify the distinction between the rulers and the sage in the *Laozi*. In the *Laozi* the sage is the pinnacle of what a moral agent can be and there can be no equal. Demonstrating how the sage is formed provides a model for all other moral agents to follow.

In the *Laozi* some chapters depict the sage,[101] some depict rulers,[102] and some depict both the sage and rulers.[103] Some chapters can be interpreted as both depicting the sage or the rulers because they employ the image of the sage as an example for the best rulers. Chapters 5, 28, 60, 71 and 81 specifically depict how the sage would act. The other chapters referencing the sage (*shengren)* can be interpreted as a depiction of either the sage or rulers, because these chapters end with the phrase 'that is why the sage... 是以聖人

[100] These generic rulers do not have a specific term referring to them, but in chapter 30, the *Laozi* mentions "以道佐人主者 the person who assists the rulers of men with the *dao* " depicts the hierarchy between the ruler and the one who assists her to rule the state, thus I name it as the generic rulers.

[101] Chapters 2, 3, 5, 7, 12, 22, 26, 27, 28, 29, 47, 49, 57, 58, 60, 63, 64, 66, 70, 71, 72, 73, 77, 78, 79, 81

[102] Chapter 3, 26, 28, 32, 37, 39, 42, 57, 58, 61, 63, 64, 65, 69, 70, 72, 73, 74, 80

[103] Chapter 13, 17, 19, 29, 46, 48, 50, 54

...'. This phrase depicts the ideal image of the sage, which the sage or rulers can follow to ensure they perform the correct actions.

Regarding rulers, the *Laozi* references them in two ways. Firstly it emphasises that the best rulers are sage-like rulers,[104] in those chapters that end with the phrase "that is why... 是以聖人..." which reveals the sage's conduct as the model for the moral agent/rulers to emulate; or the chapters link the rulers with the description of the principles of the *dao* as the best way to rule. Secondly, the *Laozi* deals with how rulers should deal with real situations in order to achieve desired consequences, irrespective of whether the rule emulates the sage or not.

Given the various categories of moral agents in the *Laozi*, we can find that the notions of the sage and other moral agents are interweaved with philosophical and political ideas. That is to say, as the exemplary figure of the moral agent, the sage acts as the role model for rulers to emulate, based on an ideal world where the sage is at one with the *dao*. However, rulers do not operate in an ideal world but have to govern states subject to corrupt and imperial courts. So, while the *Laozi* claims the best rulers rule their states in accordance with how the sage acts or at least try to emulate the actions of the sage, it also recognizes that rulers have to rule in a world where things are not ideal. As mentioned previously, the *Laozi* advocates that rulers should aim to emulate the sage who, as the exemplary figure for the moral agent, is completely engaged in the *dao*. The question, arising from this instruction is how to foster the moral agents to attain the standard of sage-like rulers? Being completely engaged in the *dao*, means the sage attains the *dao*, and lives and acts accordingly, like the *dao*. At this stage it is useful to provide a brief description of what living and acting in accordance with the *dao* consists of, which can be understood through the interpretation of *ziran* and *wuwei*. As I mentioned above in the first section, *ziran* and *wuwei* in the *Laozi* are correlated but I

[104] Moeller in his book does not really distinguish between the sage and the sage-like rulers, since following his reading of the *Laozi*, it is understandable to read them indistinguishably because he argues that the *Laozi* should be read by only one person, the ruler. (Moeller, 20016, pp. 56-57.)

disagree with Karyn Lai's argument that *ziran* entails *wuwei*.[105] I suggest that *wuwei* is the action that the moral agent takes in the state of *ziran*, and the state of *ziran* is a kind of cultivated disposition for the moral agent. As Roger Ames argues "spontaneity (*ziran*) must be clearly distinguished from randomness and impetuosity, in fact, far from being 'uncaused',[106] it is novelty made possible by a cultivated disposition."[107] I agree that *ziran* for the moral agent in realistic human society is a sort of cultivated disposition that implements the thinking for the moral agent to make decisions about choices. But I do not think that it is convincing to argue the notion of *ziran* in the *Laozi* by using an interpretation of the story of *Cook Ding* in the *Zhuangzi*, since it is clearly different from the notion of *ziran* in the *Laozi,* not only the contents of the state of *ziran* adopted by the moral agent but also by the *dao*. It is certainly possible to interpret that the butcher in *Cook Ding* in the *Zhuangzi* is in the state of *ziran*, moreover the way he butchers an ox is shaped and cultivated through the progress of his practice and finally reaching the state of *ziran*.[108] However, we cannot find any evidence in the *Laozi* explicitly upholding the idea that the moral agent can reach the state of *ziran* by means of practice.

In the *Laozi*, *ziran* is depicted as a state indicating a condition either for the *dao* or for the moral agent to be or to conduct. For the *dao*, *ziran* is to follow itself as being what it is, as stated in chapter 25, "the *dao* emulates *ziran* being so-itself."[109] For the moral agent, *ziran* involves perceiving and recognising

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[105] Lai, K. (2007). *Ziran* and *Wuwei* in the *Daodejing*: An Ethical Assessment. *Dao* , 6(4), 325-337.

[106] For more discussion on this issue to see the paper, freedom in Freedom in Parts of the Zhuangzi and Epictetus by Richard King who has done a good discussion about spontaneity in the *Zhuangzi*. King, R. (2018). Freedom in Parts of the Zhuangzi and Epictetus. In G. Lloyd & J. Zhao (Eds.), *Ancient Greece and China Compared* (pp. 83-109). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[107] Ames, R.T. & Hall, D.L., (2004). *Dao dejing* : "making this life significant" : a philosophical translation First trade paperback., New York: Ballantine Books, pp. 23-4.

[108] Ziporyn, B., (2009). Zhuangzi : the essential writings : with selections from traditional commentaries, Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett.

[109] 道法自然。 the *dao* emulates *ziran* being so-itself.

oneself, others and the relationships among them; and reacting to others in the same way as the sage (as the moral agent). Ames argues similarly that "spontaneous action is a mirroring response. As such, it is action that accommodates the 'other' to who one is responding."[110] As stated in Chapter 17, "*the best (ruler), (the ruled) barely knows where she is; the second best, (the ruled) love and praise her; the next level, they fear her, they despise her. There is not enough trust in the ruler, the ruled would not trust her. She appears to be leisure, does not command much. The deed is completed, and her undertaking is successful, while the ruled people all said: "We are who we are of ourselves."*[111] The ruled (百姓 *baixing)* claim in this chapter that they are being *ziran*, which expresses that the ruled recognise themselves being *ziran* because, under the government of the best ruler who is not, or is only barely, recognised or known by the ruled, the ruled recognise that their behaviours and situations occur without being guided, manipulated or coerced by anyone. The best rulers do not take any credit for such achievements, but rather step back and give the credit to the ruled; they do not command, but take responsibility for their actions, thus establishing the ideal or the best relationship with the ruled. The ruled, thus, believe that "百姓皆謂我自然 all has been done by themselves and that they are being themselves naturally or spontaneously" (Chapter 17).

Having articulated how *ziran* is the state that the *Laozi* aims the moral agent to achieve after the formation of the moral agent, I shall now consider *wuwei*. The *Laozi* addresses that the sage (*shengren* 聖人) acts *wuwei* because it is in the state of *ziran* that enables the sage to be capable of deciding which action is appropriate to any given and related situation. Slingerland argues that individual *wuwei* as the "*personal spiritual ideal*" is more essential than *wuwei*

[110] Ames, R.T. & Hall, D.L., (2004). Dao dejing : "making this life significant" : a philosophical translation First trade paperback., New York: Ballantine Books, p. 24.

[111] Chapter 17 太上，不知有之;其次，親而譽之;其次，畏之;其次，侮之。信不足焉有不信焉。悠兮， 其貴言。功成事遂，百姓皆謂我自然。(all the translation of the *Laozi* is based on James Legge's.)

as the governmental ideal.[112] He further argues that *wuwei* in the *Laozi* "becomes something of a polemical barb aimed at the Confucians: 'not-doing' is held up as an ideal in order to pointedly contrast with the incessant and harmful 'doing' or 'regarding' of Confucianism."[113] On the other hand, Roger Ames argues that *wuwei* is a principle of ruling the states instead of the personal ideal.[114] I agree both that *wuwei* is not simply regarding or functioning on the level of ruling the states, but is also associated with the personal understanding of the interaction between the moral agent and the external world. For the sage, or the sage-like ruler, the personal level and the ruling level are interconnected, because being in the state of *wuwei* for the moral agent is about being harmonised with the *dao* that leads the moral agent, i.e. the sage and the sage-like ruler in this case, to the action without any purpose and to act and react in accordance with the related situation. For example, in chapter 2, *wuwei* is related to the action of the sage at both the personal and ruling level, and in chapter 43, it is about the generic benefits of *wuwei*, which can also be interpreted at both levels.[115]

As the exemplary moral agent in the socio-political sense, the formation of becoming a sage-like ruler requires the moral agent to become in the state of *ziran* and act *wuwei* in front of the ordinary masses. I suggest that there are two steps for the rulers to follow. Firstly, the ruler ameliorates from the conduct

[112] Slingerland, E. (2000). Effortless Action: The Chinese Spiritual Ideal of *wu*-wei. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 68(2), 293-327, p. 297.

[113] Slingerland, E. (2014-12-12). The Situationist Critique and Early Confucian Virtue Ethics. In Cultivating Virtue: Perspectives from Philosophy, Theology, and Psychology. : Oxford University Press, p.77.

[114] Ames, R., (1983). *The art of rulership: A study in ancient Chinese political thought*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, pp. 33-39.

[115] Chapter 2 是以聖人処無為之事。that is why the sage is doing the affairs of *wuwei*. Chapter 43 吾是以知無為之有益。I, thus, am aware of the benefits of *wuwei*.

of 'acting' 為 *wei* to one of 'acting' *wuwei.*[116] Secondly, the rulers will change their visions of the external human society from wishing to rule well to immersing themselves among the ruled to perceive and think from the perspectives of the ruled. The latter vision implemented from the state of *ziran* and acting *wuwei* prevails over the one just aiming at wishing to rule the state well.

The hierarchy of rulers is shown in chapter 17, "*the best (ruler), (the ruled) barely knows where she is; the second best, (the ruled) love and praise her; the next level, they fear her, they despise her. There is not enough trust in the ruler, the ruled would not trust her."*[117] The *Laozi* displays three types of rulers, each ruling in a different way, which results in different reactions from the ruled, ranging from barely knowing the ruler to fearing and despising the ruler. As Moeller noted, the *Laozi* believes that it is best for the ruled not to know there is a ruler at all, because it proves that the ruler does not press, command or coerce the ruled.[118] The best ruler is one who would rule in the manner of the sage.

In addition to Moeller's view, I believe the *Laozi* shows that one who rules in the manner of the sage perceives human society differently from the majority of rulers, which do not rule in the manner of the sage. As the *Laozi* states in chapter 49, "*the sage does not have an invariable heart of their own but uses the heart of the ruled as their heart*."[119] The sage immerses themself into the

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[116] Slingerland has done a great job to distinguish the semantic meanings of *wei* in accordance with the linguistic usage in the text of the *Laozi*. See his book: Slingerland, Edward Gilman (1998). Effortless Action: Wu-Wei as a Spiritual Ideal in Early China. Dissertation, Stanford University, p.303.

[117] Chapter 17 太上，不知有之;其次，親而譽之;其次，畏之;其次，侮之。

[118] Moeller, H., & Laozi. (2007). *Daodejing (Laozi) : A complete translation and commentary*. Chicago, Ill.: Open Court, p. 46.

[119] Chapter 49 聖人無常心，以百姓心為心。… 聖人在天下，歙歙為天下渾其心，百姓皆注其耳目，聖人皆孩之。The sage in the world, with no inclination, and keeps her heart

ruled by means of using the heart of the ruled to perceive human society. As I mentioned above, the vision of the moral agent determines the thinking regarding their actions, since it correlates with their appreciation of the situation and the decision upon it. The differences of the rulers in chapter 17 demonstrate the different visions of the rulers. The best ruler takes the visions of the ruled, immerses themself in the ruled and takes care of and nourishes them without being noticed. The best ruler does not differentiate their own perceptions from those of the ruled, rather the best ruler understands what the ruled perceive and determines the best course of action to take based on the ruled's perceptions. This process means that the sage or the sage-like ruler, the best ruler in chapter 17, is barely noticed by the ruled.

As Moeller indicated, in chapter 17, the *Laozi* rigorously asserts that Daoist rulers are the best, and places Confucian rulers below them.[120] Confucian rulers are loved by the ruled, because, according to Mencius's view about ruling, rulers should be benevolent to the ruled. A benevolent ruler has compassion for the ruled and brings peace and prosperity.[121] These types of rulers are displaying their capabilities and credibility 見 *jian* to the masses and are proud of themselves 自矜 *zijin* in the way their ruling has brought peace and prosperity to the ruled and the states.[122] Furthermore, the ruler who has compassion for the ruled is different from the sage, who has no heart but uses the hearts of the ruled. Bestowing compassion illustrates the political hierarchy between the ruler and the ruled, with the ruler clearly in the position of authority. Indeed, this position of authority gives the ruler the power to treat the ruled well, and equally to treat them brutally as the ruler chooses. This is

in the state of simplicity to all. The ruled are all poured into her eyes and ears, and she treats them all as her children.

120 Moeller, H., (2007). *Daodejing (Laozi) : A complete translation and commentary*. Chicago, Ill.: Open Court, p. 46.

121 Im, M. (2011-10-04). Mencius as Consequentialist. In Ethics in Early China: An Anthology. : Hong Kong University Press, p. 56.

122 Chapter 24

radically different from the sage, who by having no heart and taking the heart of the ruled is at one with the community of the ruled. This is why sage like rulers are considered to be the best, because there is no political hierarchy between the ruler and the ruled. Thus, the *Laozi* demonstrates the consequentialist view through the second-best rulers who bring good consequences for the ruled. In Chapter 17, the *Laozi* shows that although they are considered as good rulers, they do not possess the highest good.

The *Laozi* does not explicitly reveal how moral agents can reach the state of *ziran* and act *wuwei.* Instead it offers an obscure approach for moral agents to possess the *dao* and act *wuwei* by reducing their acquisition of knowledge. To wit, the more knowledge the moral agent attains, the less chance they have of possessing the *dao* and acting *wuwei*. Nonetheless, it is difficult to understand why less knowledge will lead a moral agent to act *wuwei* as stated in chapter 48 as, "they who devote themselves to learning (seek) from day to day to increase (his knowledge); they who devote themselves to the Dao (seek) from day to day to diminish (his doing). they diminish it and again diminish it, till they arrive at doing nothing (on purpose). Having arrived at this point of non-action, there is nothing which he does not do. They who get as his own all under heaven does so by giving himself no trouble (with that end). If one take trouble (with that end), they are equal to getting as his own all under heaven".[123] The *Laozi* also fails to provide an explanation on how the sage knows about the world without experiencing the world, as stated in chapter 47, "one does not step out the house but knows about the world; (the agent) does not look out of the windows but sees the *dao* of heaven. The further the sage goes, the less the sage knows. That is why the sage knows without going out anywhere, names things without seeing anything, completes things without actions."[124] It seems contrary to common sense that knowledge is an impediment for moral

[123] Chapter 48 為學日益，為道日損。損之又損，以至於無為。無為而無不為。取天下常以無事，及其有事，不足以取天下。Translated by James Legge.

[124] Chapter 47 不出戶知天下；不闚牖見天道。其出彌遠，其知彌少。是以聖人不行而知，不見而名，不為而成。

agents to achieve the state of *ziran* and act *wuwei*, but the Laozi suggests the less one obtains knowledge, the more likely one can be in a state of *ziran* and act *wuwei*. Roger Ames argues that "knowing, seeing and doing in Daoism are always local… Knowledge is not the subjective representation of some objective reality, but a quality of the local experience itself. It is the realising of a particular kind of experience in the sense of bringing it about and making it real."[125] It is plausible that the Daoist knowledge always bears the local experience that moral agents have. However, Ames does not justify how moral agents are capable of having the knowledge of the world by the attainment of local experience. And to what extent, can the *Laozi* argue that the further one goes, the less one knows? My own research does not fully solve the tension between knowledge and acting *wuwei* and this remains an area for future research.

1.3.2 The Formation of the Moral Agent in Plato

Unlike the *Laozi*, Plato's philosophic ideas and thoughts on the formation of the moral agent can be interpreted and developed in different ways, such as the education of the moral agent or how to become a philosopher-king. In order to enable comparison, I will first highlight the representations of the moral agent in Plato, then demonstrate the formation of the moral agent in terms of how to become a philosopher-king. I will then compare Plato's philosopher-king with the *Laozi*'s sage-like ruler to argue in both cases that the quality of the moral agent takes priority over the decision-making process. In particular, in order to parallel the point of formation of the moral agent between the *Laozi* and Plato, I argue that the formation of the moral agent demonstrated by Plato provides the moral agent an advantage in experience, insight and reasoning (*Republic* 580d-583b). All of these traits will further influence their point of vision and choices in the decision procedures.

We can distinguish two senses of the moral agent in Plato: philosophically the moral agent can be a philosopher or a non-philosopher; socio-politically the

[125] Ames, R. and Hill, D., (2006), p.150.

moral agent can be a professional in a variety of roles, such as a guardian or ruler. The two senses interconnect, which is to say, the best ruler for Plato should be either a philosopher or a ruler who practices philosophy, the so-called philosopher-king (*Republic* 473d-e). Plato goes to great lengths to differentiate philosophers from common people and argues that the philosopher is the best person to rule the state in Book VI. Before moving on to my discussion of the formation of the moral agent, I will explore the distinction between these two senses of moral agent in Plato in more detail.

Socio-politically, Plato's idea of the moral agent is different from the *Laozi*'s in that we can find that Plato considers the notion of the moral agent within the discussion of virtue/justice. Plato initially illustrates that citizens are moral agents in the first city by using Glaucon's arguments that the rules of justice come out of agreement regarding the moral agent's interests in society, and in which the moral agent neither does unjust action nor is harmed by unjust action; and the life of injustice is better than that of justice. In order to argue against this, (*Republic* 359-362) Plato uses Socrates to show Glaucon and Adeimantus that justice is good for its own sake; and justice will bring the best consequences. Plato starts with the analogy between the justice of the city and that of the person.[126] Plato depicts what Glaucon calls a city of pigs (*Republic* 372d) and an ideal city (*Republic* 412b-427d). In the city of pigs, "the essential minimum amount of people would be four or five for a city, including famer, builder, weaver and cobbler … let's see what sort of life our citizens will lead when they've been provided for in the way we have been describing" (*Republic* 369d-372d). According to Socrates, each professional should focus on what they are good at and produce products for the whole city and the result will be

[126] It is true that if Plato wants to validate the argument, he must show that, as Julia Annas argues, the justice of the city contains the same sense with that of the person. But I will not discuss this point now, since the main focus at this stage is on the moral agent in the social-political sense. Annas, J., & Plato. (1981). An introduction to Plato's Republic. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 72-3.

that they will live a peaceful life without poverty and wars.[127] After Glaucon says he does not want to live in a city of pigs, Socrates agrees to expand it into a "luxurious" city (*Republic* 372e). In this city, a class of soldier emerges as Guardians of the state (*Republic* 376d), who are later subdivided into two classes: warrior-guardians and rulers (*Republic* 412e, 413c, 414a-b), and non-philosophers and philosophers (*Republic* 486a).[128]

In this section I will consider how the moral agent attains the highest status of philosopher-king. Plato demonstrates two steps in the cultivation and formation of the moral agent in the *Republic*; first, he reveals the ruler of the states is generated from the class of guardians in the social-political system; second, he reveals the process of how the ruler becomes a philosopher king, the ideal ruler. I will further demonstrate that having achieved philosopher-king status, the moral agent attains virtue as the highest good, which makes their actions good in themselves and for their consequences.

Plato develops his accounts of the best ruler in two stages, the second stage, found in Books V-IX, is more important to my argument, but is best understood with awareness of the first stage from Books II - IV. The first stage considers how a state and its rulers are created through the description of three cities. Plato recounts how Socrates describes a first city, which he considers to be an ideal city, but Glaucon argues it is actually a city of pigs (*Republic* 372d). Socrates therefore describes a second luxurious city in which the class of

[127] Within these professionals, there are rankings. Socrates thinks that the farmer is the most important because they need to provide food to the city. And this argument arises out of two premises: 1. Individuals are insufficient to live in the city, they have to cooperate with each other, and the justice is dwelled in the cooperation. (R 376d-e) 2. Individuals tend to practice different professions from each other naturally. (R. 370b) (a similar idea can be seen in Pappas, N. (1995). /Plato and the Republic (Routledge philosophy guidebooks). London: Routledge, p. 67.)

[128] Plato uses poets who write music and poems to educate the youth becoming guardians, but does not considers or illustrates that poets functions as a moral agent in the social-political system. The main discussion is just on the educational process of guardians.

guardian is created (*Republic* 372e-373e) and finally the third city is the good-state, the Kallipolis (*Republic* 472c).

Plato's depiction of the first city illustrates that justice can only be derived from co-operation among all the professionals, since Plato does not explicitly display what justice is and how it functions. Socrates thinks and presumes that people in the first city cannot be self-sufficient (*Republic* 369b), and so must focus on their own job and cooperate with others to meet their needs. Justice is demonstrated by each professional completing their own job and cooperating with all the other professionals.[129] However, when Glaucon calls the first city the city of pigs, not only does Socrates not contradict this, but ironically mentions that there should be a professional pig feeder in the second city (*Republic* 373c). It seems that although Socrates says that the first city is a healthy state, he does not believe that justice explicitly appears within it. According to Pappas, Plato believes that it is not possible to find justice in the first city because it is not philosophical and this does not allow the moral agent to become cultivated and a virtuous person.[130]

In Plato's second city the growth in population and the ensuing need for land led to war between citizens, which led to the creation of the role of Guardian to protect the state (*Republic* 373d). Plato utilises the same premise to argue for the establishment of a guardian who is capable of only doing one thing well as a professional (*Republic* 374a-375a). Plato further believes that rulers are generated from the class of guardians.[131] However, Plato also suggests that the ruler is created from citizens who contain 'gold' in their body mixed by the gods (*Republic* 415a).

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[129] Annas, J. (1981), p. 75; Pappas, N. (1995), p. 61.

[130] Pappas, N. (1995). /Plato and the Republic/ (Routledge philosophy guidebooks). London: Routledge, p. 69.

[131] "Anyone who is tested in this way as a child, youth, and adult, and always comes out of it untainted, is to be made a ruler as well as a guardian; he is to be honoured in life, and to receive after his death the most prized tombs and memorials." (*Republic* 413e-414a)

In constructing the second city, the principle that citizens can only perform one professional function remains the same; they cannot carry more than one task. The main difference between the second city and the city of pigs is the introduction of a professional cadre tasked with protecting the states; guardians (*Republic* 374c). Guardians are radically different from all other professionals such as cobblers, farmers or builders and so on, and possess conflicting characters which are both gentle and high-spirited at the same time. A good guardian is able to distinguish between friends and enemies, treating friends gently and bravely fighting enemies (*Republic* 375c). Distinguishing between friends and enemies requires the moral agent to have capabilities of reasoning, understanding and decision-making relating to people with whom they interact. Plato recognizes that for the moral agent to achieve such capabilities requires education from a young age, since he asks, "haven't you noticed that imitations practiced from youth become part of nature and settle into habits of gesture, voice, and thought?" (*Republic* 395d). According to Annas, "the well-educated person is not a prodigy in any subject, or a range of subjects; the criterion of successful education is a morally mature and, as we say, 'healthy' outlook on the world."[132] This means that for Plato education for guardians and rulers is not about skills, but rather it is about developing the right character traits. However, this kind of education can also result in the class of armies in the states, which indicates that *via* the education of music and sports, the guardians and rulers are able to formulate good beliefs or opinions. Nevertheless, Plato notes that further education for guardians is required to become a better ruler (*Republic* 416 a-c). This indicates that education of guardians does not complete the formation of moral agents' rationality, which leads to guardians with good character are not qualified as the best rulers in Plato.

Before Socrates described the ideal state, he was hesitant to say what exactly should be changed to make the state ideal, but he did claim that "until philosophers rule as kings or those who are now called kings and leading men

[132] Annas, J., & Plato. (1981), p. 83.

genuinely and adequately philosophise, that is, until political power and philosophy entirely coincide, while the many natures who at present pursue either one exclusively are forcibly prevented from doing so, cities will have no rest from evils, nor, I think, will the human race" (*Republic* 473d-e). However, Adeimantus does not accept what Socrates tells him, rather he claims that "those who continue in it for a longer time — the greatest number become cranks, not to say completely vicious, while those who seem completely decent are rendered useless to the city because of the studies you recommend" (*Republic* 487 c-d). Adeimantus seems to suggest that for ordinary people, not only is philosophy useless, it is actually harmful. Socrates repudiates the uselessness of philosophy by arguing that the reason why it seems useless is because philosophers are not valued by others. However, to a certain extent, Socrates agrees that philosophers are useless, when he states: "*Next tell him that what he says is true, that the most decent among the philosophers are useless to the majority. Tell him not to blame those decent people for this but the ones who don't make use of them. It isn't natural for the captain to beg the sailors to be ruled by him nor for the wise to knock at the doors of the rich—the man who came up with that wisecrack made a mistake*" (*Republic* 489b). It seems that philosophers are not merely useless but also harmful to the states in the analogy of the *cave* (*Republic* 514-515c). However, this tension between knowledge and opinion reveals the different foundations of visions and reasoning between philosophers and other citizens. I will argue this point at length in the next section and reveal why philosophers are not understood by other citizens and are therefore considered to be useless.

Having briefly revealed the moral agent in the three states and different social classes, including professionals, guardians and rulers, and the philosopher king, I shall move on to focus on how the decision making of moral agents alters after becoming educated. Furthermore, I will show exactly how the formation of the moral agent achieves good in itself and for its consequences.

I propose that the accounts for decision making of rulers who rely on opinions, are different from that of philosopher-kings, who rely on knowledge. On this

point, I will compare Plato with the *Laozi* since the same point differentiates the rulers from the sage or sage-like rulers. The *Laozi* does not explicitly offer a guideline for moral agents becoming rulers, nor does it provide a clear guideline for rulers to become sage-like rulers. The *Laozi* instructs rulers to become sage-like rulers by depicting the model of the sage including the sage's image, mental state and so on, and holding this model up for moral agents to emulate; whereas Plato is rather different in terms of educating guardians, rulers and philosopher-kings. At this point, we may ask why is education necessary for guardians and rulers, but does not appear in the city of pigs? And why couldn't rulers, after being educated in music and sport, be the best ruler in the state as philosopher kings? What has changed through these processes of education?

Moral agents change their perceptions and reasoning for decisions from the first city (the city of pigs) to the third city (ideal state) depending on their education. In the first city, moral agents, generally speaking, are those professionals who merely focus on their own jobs.[133] The professionals in the first city, according to Plato, do not need to distinguish who friends or enemies are, because the city is established based on what Annas calls principles of specialisations,[134] which mean each professional merely needs to finish their own job and exchange their produce with others to fulfil their other needs, resulting in a happy life (*Republic* 372b-c). Although in the second city, guardians and rulers, like other professionals, are only doing their own job, the nature of the job that guardians and rulers do is to look after the safety of the state. (*Republic* 374-376). The vision of guardians and rulers is to identify if other states or people are friendly or not. The process of identification involves

[133] On the interpretation of "their own job" see Julia Annas' interpretation, she argues that doing their own job in Plato does not really involve spontaneity and individuality that the moral agent can make their own decision on their life-styles and the divergence of jobs, but rather Plato means that "'doing their own job' implies a great deal of conformity and identification with a role share by others." (Annas, J., [1981], p. 74)

[134] Annas, J., (1981), pp. 75-6.

perception, reasoning, and deliberation to decide if a state or person is friend or foe. Plato believes that the vision of guardians and rulers determines how they guard and govern states, and thus what they learn during their youth including what they watch, listen to and read should be refined. This is because guardians and rulers would imitate what they have learned, such as the content and values of poems, which will thus influence the dispositions of guardians and rulers through their habits in daily life (*Republic* 395d).

A detailed curriculum is introduced by Plato for the education of guardians and rulers, including in the fields of music and sport. At first sight, it seems that the teaching of music is to train the soul, and the teaching of sport is to train the body (*Republic* 376e). However, Socrates later claims that the teaching of sport is also to train the soul, because a healthy soul ensures a healthy body (*Republic* 403d). On finishing their education, guardians and rulers are merely capable of formulating opinions (*doxa*) rather than knowledge, because the learning process for the guardians in the second city is to learn and imitate the contents of the poems (*Republic* 379-394). The dispositions, visions and thoughts of moral agents are formulated in accordance with the content and the value of the poems that prevail in the states. This education of guardians, which only enables them to formulate opinions rather than knowledge, lays the foundation for the point that there must be someone else — a philosopher — who is better suited to be the ruler of the state, echoing the argument about the dispute between poems and philosophy in Book X (*Republic* 607b). Plato constrains poets from composing anything that depicts confrontations among gods or anything describing gods as being immoral or unjust. For example, as stated in the passage, “since a god is good, he is not – as most people claim – the cause of everything that happens to human beings but of only a few things, for good things are fewer than bad ones in our lives. … Then we won’t accept from anyone the foolish mistake Homer makes about the gods when he says, ‘there are two urns at the threshold of Zeus, one filled with good fates, the other with bad ones” (the *Republic* 379c-d).

According to Plato's description of the learning of guardians and rulers, their quality as moral agents depends on the contents of the poems used in their education. Plato also believes that guardians and rulers are not able to reflect upon their learning because everything they learn is opinion rather than factual knowledge. If the poems from which they are educated are changed then what the guardians and rulers learn would be different, leaving them in a state of flux. As Sedley noted, it seems to him that what Plato believes is that knowledge is "something incapable of change".[135] This denotes that not only are guardians' and rulers' opinions unstable for the governing of the states, but also the learning process seems endless, in order to attain knowledge instead of opinions. Plato takes another stance to elucidate this point: "First, none of them should possess any private property beyond what is wholly necessary. Second, none of them should have a house or storeroom that isn't open for all to enter at will. Third, whatever sustenance moderate and courageous warrior-athletes require in order to have neither shortfall nor surplus in a given year they'll receive by taxation on the other citizens as a salary for their guardianship. Fourth, they'll have common messes and live together like soldiers in a camp" (*Republic* 416b-e). I agree with Pappas' view that in order to remove the temptation of money, the education of guardians and rulers is endless.[136] Nevertheless, the beliefs of guardians and rulers can be easily changed because, as Plato showed, the learning process and materials are in flux and only formulate opinions (*Republic* 416b-e). Keeping rulers and guardians unchanged is achieved by keeping them away from the temptations of money and other personal things. The premise that a professional can only do one job is set in the establishment of the first and second cities, which is to say each farmer, doctor, builder and so on, do their own work and exchange their output for the output of others. However, the guardians' and rulers' job are to protect the states. They are not supposed to own any money other than

[135] Sedley, D. (2007). Philosophy, the Forms, and the Art of Ruling. In G. Ferrari (Ed.), The Cambridge Companion to Plato's Republic (Cambridge Companions to Philosophy, pp. 256-283). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 258.

[136] Pappas, N. (1995). *Plato and the Republic* (Routledge philosophy guidebooks). London: Routledge, p. 73.

for essential needs of living. Otherwise, guardians and rulers will become indistinguishable from other professionals. This goes against the premise mentioned in the *Republic* 370a-b that a person should only do one job in accordance with their nature. Thus, guardians and rulers must be constrained to encounter objects or own wealth and as a result what they learn is basically music and sports. The guardians and rulers share the first stage of education, i.e. the music and sports, but the ruler does not merely have opinions but also knowledge. The key difference between guardians and other professionals is that professionals need to only have knowledge about their own profession, which is based on factual knowledge. Guardians and rulers, however, need to perceive and judge if the state is safe and make decisions upon it, thus they require education that cultivates their soul in order to enable them to distinguish just or unjust, moral or immoral, right or wrong.[137]

Knowledge, as we can see from the aforementioned, is the criterion to distinguish between philosopher-kings and non-philosopher rulers and guardians. As David Sedley indicated, the readers of the *Republic* are a group of imaginary people who are well educated and who believe they are knowledgeable and own knowledge themselves. He further noted that he believes Plato attempts to persuade the readers that what they own is not knowledge but rather opinions, thus they should hand themselves over to the philosopher-king's governing.[138] I am sympathetic to Sedley's suggestion for readers of the *Republic* to humble themselves in front of knowledge. Nevertheless, my focus is rather on the discrepancy of the perceptions and decision making caused by the possession of knowledge between philosopher and rulers/guardians.

In the analogy of the story of the cave in the *Republic* Book VII, Plato writes: "Therefore each of you in turn must go down to live in the common dwelling place of the others and grow accustomed to seeing in the dark. When you are

[137] I will discuss the tripartite soul and the virtuous actions in chapter 3.

[138] Sedley, D. (2007)., p.257.

used to it, you will see vastly better than the people there. And because you have seen the truth about fine, just, and good things, you will know each image for what it is and also that of which it is the image. Thus, for you and for us, the city will be governed" (*Republic* 520c-d). Plato indicates the difference between knowledge and opinions through depiction of the cave. He believes that the opinions, like the images on the wall, are in flux. They are variable between true and false, and subjective to different people. However, knowledge is incapable of change. On the one hand, Plato indicates that philosophers who have seen the form of good do not want to dwell in human society. On the other hand, since they have seen the form of good, based on this knowledge, the philosopher is the best ruler of the state. A similar portrait of philosophers is displayed in Theaetetus in which the philosophers want to fly up and away from human society (*Theaetetus* 172c-176b). This passage is similar to the beginning of the *Republic* when Thrasymachus makes Socrates stay for the discussion about justice (*Republic* 327c). In addition to philosopher-kings being most suited because of their knowledge, Plato also calculated that the happiness of the philosopher king is 729 times greater than that of tyrants (*Republic* 587d-e).

1.4 Comparison of the Moral Agent in the *Laozi* and Plato

Comparing how the *Laozi* and Plato shape and educate the moral agent to become the exemplar figure in each philosophy helps to understand how each projects the essential perspectives of the discussion of goodness, the process of cultivation/education and the respective treatment of knowledge. By comparing these perspectives between the *Laozi* and Plato, not only enables a thorough analysis of the similarities and differences of these points, but also allows more insightful reflections, such as what knowledge is to moral agents in general, and whether the knowledge is necessary for moral agents to attain goodness. In this section the comparisons will presented in two ways. First, the way the *Laozi* and Plato present images of ideal states will be compared, and second the relationship between knowledge and the formulation of the moral agent will be compared.

We can find ideal states encompassing ideal rulers, ideal regulations/laws as well as ideal ways of life in the *Laozi* and Plato. In the *Laozi*, it is depicted as the small state in chapter 80 and in Plato, it is depicted as the ideal state in the second city. However, it is pointless to compare these two philosophies if they merely agree with each other. Plato reckons that the ideal state is derived from the first city that contains the minimum numbers of citizens who are professionals in their own fields to fulfil the basic needs of the whole city. However, the good state is radically different from the city of pigs, because the city of pigs is built in accordance with what Julia Annas calls the principle of specialisation, which means each person does only one job.[139] As Annas argues, Plato is aware of the importance of the existence of different kinds of people, although he is not primarily interested in the differentiation of the professions such as shoemakers or farmers. Rather, his interest is in the wider differences of type, i.e. three classes of the state in accordance with the tripartite soul.[140] Furthermore, Plato believes that there will be merchants operating between different states, which will fuel the development and the corruption of the first city (*Republic* 370e-371b).[141] This is contrary to the view of the *Laozi*, which expresses that the state should remain simple, live and work in an old-fashioned style and should not come into contact with its neighbour-states. It seems that the depiction of the city of pigs is similar to the state in the *Laozi* in terms of self-sufficiency. In chapter 80,[142] the *Laozi* vividly

[139] Annas, J., & Plato. (1981). An introduction to Plato's Republic. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 73.

[140] Annas, J. (1981). An introduction to Plato's Republic. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 75.

[141] Ibid, p. 76.

[142] Chapter 80 小國寡民。使有什伯之器而不用；使民重死而不遠徙。雖有舟輿，無所乘之，雖有甲兵，無所陳之。使民復結繩而用之，甘其食，美其服，安其居，樂其俗。鄰國相望，雞犬之聲相聞，民至老死，不相往來。As chapter 80 notes: "*the state is small with small amount of people. Though there were individuals with the abilities of ten or a hundred men, there should be no employment of them; I would make the people, while looking on death as a grievous thing, yet not*

reveals a self-sufficient and simple lifestyle of the ruled living in a small state, and Moeller notes that this state is "the ideal Daoist state" full of contentment in the virtue of a lack of desire for luxury goods.[143] Although the city of pigs and Moeller's so called "ideal Daoist state", a view I incidentally disagree with, both portray self-sufficiency and contentment, the small state in the Laozi does not contain any specific professionals, which is at variance to the city of pigs. This conflicting idea on the simplest states foreshadows the discrepancy of the formation of the moral agent between the *Laozi* and Plato.

The differences of the ideal states between the *Laozi* and Plato triggers their discrepancy of the formation of the moral agent with regard to the treatment of knowledge. On the basis of this understanding of these kinds of goodness, they have considered how to shape and educate the moral agent in order to possess the best good, that is for the moral agent to have both the intrinsic good and the best consequences. Although they have demonstrated the process of the formation of the moral agent differently, based on my analysis of the process of cultivating the moral agent in the *Laozi* and Plato, I believe that both think that there is a different way of cultivating the moral agent to obtain good in itself and for its consequences.

It is intriguing that we find that the *Laozi* and Plato recognise consequentialist views as being good, but neither regard such views as the highest good. The highest good is something that possesses both good in itself and achieves good consequences. The *Laozi* consider the kind of Confucian ruler who is

remove elsewhere (to avoid it). Though they had boats and carriages, they should have no occasion to ride in them; though they had buff coats and sharp weapons, they should have no occasion to don or use them. I would make the people return to the use of knotted cords (instead of the written characters). They should think their (coarse) food sweet; their (plain) clothes beautiful; their (poor) dwellings places of rest; and their common (simple) ways sources of enjoyment. There should be a neighbouring state within sight, and the voices of the fowls and dogs should be heard all the way from it to us, but I would make the people to old age, even to death, not have any intercourse with it."

[143] Moeller, H.-G. & Laozi, 2007. *Daodejing (Laozi) : a complete translation and commentary*, Chicago, Ill.: Open Court, p.184.

loved by the ruled to be a good ruler, but ranks it below the Daoist ruler, which it considers to be the best. The advocates for different preferred concepts will lead to disputes within the ruled, since the ruled may value items differently. Some may think that they are righteous and believe others are unrighteous and should be punished, while the others may consider themselves to be the righteous ones. The actions of the ruler in managing these diverse views could result in fights between the ruled, against the state itself and between states. The *Laozi* considers the best ruler as the sage-like ruler, who rules by being in the state of *ziran* and acting *wuwei*. The process to become a sage-like ruler involves the moral agent abandoning the distinction of conventional social and moral values that Confucians would pursue, such as benevolence (仁 *ren*) and righteousness (義 *yi*),[144] and also well-established preferred concepts or properties, such as the strong (强 *qiang*), full (全 *quan*), more (多 *duo*), and new (新 *xin*).[145] The features, *qiang*, *quan*, *duo*, and *xin*, reveal the conventional advantageous traits, but each has an opposing pair; weak, empty, less and old. By first distinguishing the opposing pairs and then comparing and contrasting the pros and cons of each enables the moral agent to pursue the feature that will achieve the best consequences, For example, in chapter 22, *qiang*, *quan*, and *xin* are the conventional desired properties and are beneficial for people with conventional valued minds. However, the *Laozi* shows that both sides have advantageous features, revealing that the conventionally weaker parts, such as the compressed (曲 *qu*), the hollow (窪 *wa*), and the worn-out (弊 *bi*) also have merits. The *Laozi* considers the opposing pairs to be united as a whole, with the two moving from one side to the other as the movement of the *dao.*[146] The moral agent should learn from the sage who holds both of them, instead of merely cherishing one side. In this way, the moral agent or the ruler can become like the sage, who is immersed in human society and does not appear conspicuous compared with the rest.

[144] Chapter 38

[145] Chapter 22

[146] Chapter 40 反者道之動

The sage in the state of *ziran* does not conduct themself based on, or derived from, any teleological aims with preference or consideration of the best consequences. Rather, the conduct is performed by the sage recognising, considering and deciding it is in accordance with different situations, or as Ames coins it as the "mirroring response".[147] However, it will result in the best for both the ruler and the ruled as both of them would be in the state of *ziran*. Thus the best ruler lives and acts in accordance with the *dao*, which leads to the states and the ruled being well ruled, because the ruler is in a state of *ziran*, which will lead to a good consequence in the same way as a Confucian ruler; but also by being in the state of *ziran* and acting *wuwei* is good in itself and for the moral agent to reach the personal ideal state.

Both the *Laozi* and Plato appear to distinguish the best ruler from the ruler based on their theory of knowledge that correlates and corresponds with the change of their visions and decisions about choice respectively. However, in the detailed analysis, it was shown that knowledge in the *Laozi* is not distinguished from opinions. To put it another way, the knowledge in the *Laozi* is as simple as "being aware of" (知 *zhi*) or personal experiences. Rather we could find more on the depiction of the states of *ziran* and *wuwei* in the *Laozi*. Unlike the *Laozi* that does not explicitly express the procedure of the attainment of knowledge and pass the knowledge to the moral agent, the distinction between knowledge and opinions has been explicitly displayed and has the metaphysical significance for Plato. The philosopher-king who is the best ruler has the knowledge and has been able to conceptualise the form of the good that makes them see through the changing images in human society to make the best decision for the states. However, the non-philosopher rulers are rather different; they have to be kept away from the temptation of wealth and fame so as to govern the state better, because their opinions would be variable between true and false, when facing different situations.

[147] Ames, R.T. & Hall, D.L., (2004), p. 24.

The fundamental difference between the *Laozi* and Plato in terms of the best rulers is how the best ruler deals with the relations between themself and the ruled. In the *Laozi*, the sage aims to become immersed into the ruled and become one of them. In this way, the ruler is capable of governing the ruled in a natural way so as not to let the ruled even notice that there is a ruler in the state; whereas for Plato the philosopher has to be persuaded to become the king. The states and the ruled force the philosopher-king to stay and govern the states because he could provide the best governing based on his vision and knowledge. Thus, in the *Theaetetus*, the philosopher would like to fly away from human society but instead must stay and rule the state (*Theaetetus* 172c). Based on my analysis, I conclude that the moral agent can be educated to become the ideal/role model for both the *Laozi* and Plato. This moral agent possesses the intrinsic good that for the *Laozi* is to live in accordance with the *dao*, which makes the moral agent act *wuwei* and be in the state of *ziran*; whereas for Plato the moral agent would be educated in a certain way so as to become a philosopher.

Chapter 2 The Final Moral Ends in Plato and the *Laozi*

2.1 Introduction

"In this world, nothing is certain except death and taxes", so said US President Benjamin Franklin as he neared his own demise in 1790. Given their respective discussions of eternity of the *dao* in the *Laozi* and immortality of the soul in Plato, philosophers might argue that even death is only certain in a physical sense. Death is an important philosophical topic, as it is an important religious topic, since it is related to the existence of mankind and the meaning of life. As the end of life, death brings the need for human beings to introspectively scrutinise and reflect on their existence and morality. In both Plato and the *Laozi* we can find that there are substantive discussions focusing on the lifespan of individuals and the morality of human life. Contrasted with the eternity of the dao in the Laozi and the immortality of the soul in Plato, human life is finite and can be easily destroyed.[148] The kind of life the moral agent should live and what is the final moral goal in such a limited lifespan are crucial questions. This chapter compares the Laozi and Plato and claims that the final moral ends function as the lighthouse guiding moral agents in the pursuit of an ethical life. In order to justify this claim, we need to initially look at the telos of human beings to verify whether there are teleological aims in the Laozi and Plato, and then to justify if those aims guide human beings' moral lives. Thereafter, I will articulate separately what the dao is and what the soul is in the Laozi and Plato respectively. In this section, not only will I offer my interpretation of the Laozi that there are three-fold Weltanschauungen related to three-fold of the dao, but also I intend to further the claim that both the Laozi and Plato identify that the best human beings are able to achieve being as

[148] Both the *dao* and soul are generalised terms here. There are more detailed descriptions of these two concepts, for example, the *dao* of heaven *tiandao* 天道, the *dao* of the sage *shengrenzhidao* 聖人之道, the rational soul, and the cosmic soul, and the mortal soul etc. I will discuss them at length later.

close as possible to the higher authorities – the dao and the cosmic soul. If we consider the dao and the cosmic soul to be the final moral goal, I argue that the different traits in the constitution of the dao and the cosmic soul act as a guide to cultivate and educate the moral agent.

The conclusion of the first chapter that the formation of the moral agent in the *Laozi* and Plato are derived from the understanding of good, leads us to question how they respectively treat knowledge. Understanding the differences in how they treat knowledge lies in how they treat the final moral goal as the teleology of human life. It is therefore necessary to examine what teleology signifies in each, and in particular under what considerations can teleology be applied to the Laozi.

To understand teleology, it is useful to consider the teachings of Aristotle. A fundamental aspect of Aristotle's teaching is the final cause (*Metaphysics* 1032 a 25, 1033 b 32, 1049 b 25), where he indicates that any action should have a targeted outcome, such as health being the final cause of walking. Andrew Payne[149] indicates that there are two kinds of teleology noted by Aristotle and more generally for all the ancient philosophy - intentional teleology and teleology of nature. Payne also argues that there is a further teleology in Plato, which is, "the variety centres on the performance of functions or characteristic activities in the course of action."[150]

Payne terms the first type of teleology as intentional teleology, which is an action performed for the sake of something with the 'something' directing the action. This kind of teleology can be seen in many dialogues of Plato. For example, as stated in the *Lysis* 291 d-e, "a man who loves his sick son will go to great trouble to obtain wine and a cup to hold the wine if it will cure his son." This example clearly shows that the particular human action is performed for the sake of a desirable end. Another example is "humans being just is not

[149] Payne, A., 2017. *The teleology of action in Plato's Republic* First., Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 3.

[150] Ibid, p. 1-2.

because justice is good in itself, but rather for the sake of not being harmed by injustice of others."[151] (the *Republic* 358e-359b)

I also believe that intentional teleology is discursively and implicitly shown in the *Laozi* in the way in which results are derived directly from an action. For example, intentional teleology is shown in chapter 73; "the way of Heaven, win without contention"[152]. I interpret this stanza as an imperative expression and promotion of guidelines for the moral agent to strive towards. That is to say, 'the way of Heaven' depicts striving to achieve the *dao*, whereas 'win without contention' denotes that winning alone is not enough if it is achieved at the expense of others. That is to say that winning is the desirable result for the moral agent but the way of winning, 'without contention' is equally important. However, interpretations vary, and Moeller suggests that this stanza denotes the defensive nature of Daoism.[153] In his commentary he treats this stanza as the manifestation of the *dao* of Heaven that results in what it acts. I agree with his point, but my interpretation actually goes further than Moeller's because the prescriptive suggestions of actions is derived from the factual manifestation of the higher authorities in the *Laozi*. That is to say, the *Laozi* discursively displays the instances of the kinds of actions performed by the sage, the *dao* of the Heaven and the *dao per se*. Intentional teleology is focused specifically on actions, which means, if an action has an objective it is *directed* and performed for the sake of achieving the objective. In this case teleology indicates that the result of the action functions as the cause of the action. In this sense, both consequentialism and deontology have teleological aims for

[151] I have also discussed it in the first chapter on the distinction of goods

[152] Chapter 73 天之道，不爭而善勝 This kind of syntactical specimens having the same nature of conducing the action for the sake of the promotive results is scatted over the texts of the *Laozi*. For example, in chapter 73, "不言而善應，不召而自來，繟然而善謀。Not to speak, and yet it is skilful in (obtaining a reply); does not call, and yet men come to it of themselves". (translated by James Legg)

[153] Moeller, H.-G. & Laozi, 2007. *Daodejing (Laozi) : a complete translation and commentary*, Chicago, Ill.: Open court, pp. 168-9.

actions. Consequentialism argues that the best consequences are the *telos* of actions; whereas the teleological aims of deontology vary depending on the motives of the moral agents, although all intend to follow moral rules in pursuit of fulfilling their duties. [154] As an example, let us consider how consequentialists and deontologists would consider the killing of a person. In general, a moral agent would consider killing someone as being morally wrong, whether that be because they consider it morally wrong to kill someone or because they could solve a problem by means other than killing. Consequentialists in a broad sense are considered to be those who consider the teleological aim of actions, which is the maximisation of good/happiness. To maximise good/happiness, the action must lead to positive good. This would lead a consequentialist to kill one person if it saved the lives of two or more others, regardless of the moral right or wrong of killing a person. However, the teleological aim for deontologists is for the moral agent to follow the moral rules and killing one person is morally wrong, regardless of whether this leads to an overall good outcome. In the case of a deontologist, even if a small lie would prevent a war from breaking out, it would still be immoral for the moral agent to lie.

Payne's second type of teleology is the teleology of nature which he describes as "the sort of purposive behaviour and structure seen in nature, as when a spider spins its web in such a way as to serve the purpose of catching

[154] This discussion is well-known as the distinction between 'agent-neutral' and 'agent-relative' moral theories. 'Agent-neutral' and 'agent-centred' have wider focuses and discussions, but regarding the issue of the teleology, 'agent-neutral' theory indicates that since the teleological aims are the same for every moral agent, thus the reasoning of moral agents are neutral while making the decision of the performed actions; whereas 'agent-relative' theory indicates that the teleological aims vary among moral agent, thus the reasoning of moral agents is relative, while making decisions. (the discussion to see papers: Dougherty, T. (2013). Agent-neutral deontology. *Philosophical Studies, 163*(2), 527-537. Scheffler, S. (1989). Deontology and the Agent: A Reply to Jonathan Bennett. *Ethics, 100*(1), 67-76. Hammerton, Matthew. (2017). Is agent-neutral deontology possible? *Journal of Ethics & Social Philosophy, 12*(3), 319.)

insects."[155] The prime example of this teleology is the creation of the cosmos by the *Demiurge*, who was responsible for creating and maintaining the physical structure of the universe as a living and structured being (*Timaeus* 30c-31a).[156] Although there is no explicit example of teleology of nature in the *Laozi*, we can see that living in accordance with the *dao* for all entities is depicted as the teleology of nature (chapter 25 and 39). In addition to these two kinds of teleology, Payne believes there is a third kind of teleology in Plato which is "the performance of functions or characteristic activities in the course of action". He illustrates this kind of teleology by arguing that in the analogy of the cave in the *Republic*, the moral agent lacks wisdom, but if the moral agent "carries out a function that promotes understanding of intelligible reality [they] can still act for the sake of understanding Forms".[157] Payne's concept of functional teleology attempts to reconcile the tension between the final cause of the philosopher's understanding of the form and at the same time philosophers living in human society, lacking wisdom of the best action to pursue the understanding of the form.

In this chapter I conduct a more detailed examination of the relationship between Payne's natural teleology and the development of moral agents by looking at the final moral goal of the moral agent in the *Laozi* and Plato. This essentially means considering what is the final goal or the *telos* of human life, or what kind of person does the moral agent intend to become. In each ethical realm there is a higher or teleological aim; maximising happiness is the teleological aim for consequentialists, and the cultivation of a virtuous agent in

[155] Payne, A., 2017. *The teleology of action in Plato's Republic* First., Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 4.

[156] Johansen, T.K., 2004. *Plato's Natural Philosophy : A Study of the Timaeus-Critias*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 2, Johansen argues that the Platonic cosmos does not happen to have goodness and beauty, but rather it is so as designed so. The teleological explanation will offer the elaboration of its end or goal. I am sympathetic to Johansen, nevertheless, I think not only this teleological explanation gives the interpretation of the ends of cosmos, but also give the final moral ends for human beings.

[157] Ibid, p.11.

virtue ethics. In the realm of Plato, the teleological aim is to live as much as possible like the gods and for the *Laozi* the teleological aim is to live in accord with the *dao*. The teleological aim is the goal for moral agents, and as such it provides a moral compass for moral agents to guide their actions and help them understand the rationale of their moral psychology. In ancient Greece, the final moral goal or *telos* of human life, *homoiosis theoi kata to dunaton*, becoming as close to godlike as possible, has become more widely recognised and accepted in the field of ancient philosophy. As David Sedley points out, it is for human beings to become like the gods as much as possible.[158] John M. Armstrong furthers Sedley's point by arguing that with the endorsement of the idea that the identification of god with intelligence in the *Timaeus*, the *Philebus* and the *Laws*, becoming like a god is not moving away from the sensible world[159] but rather improving it, in particular in the *Laws*.[160] Similarly, in Chinese culture during the Warring States period, discussion of what kind of lives people should pursue was prevalent. For the *Laozi*, to live in accordance with the *dao* is the ideal and final moral goal for mankind, as claimed in chapter 39.[161] The *dao* will impose order into the entities in the cosmos. Order, as I

[158] Annas, Platonic Ethics, Old and New (Ithaca, NY, 1999), ch. 3; Sedley, D (1999). The Ideal of Godlikeness. In G. Fine (ed.), Plato Ethics, Politics, Religion, and the Soul. Oxford University Press. pp. 309-28, p.309.For other discussions see J. Duerlinger, 'Ethics and the Divine Life in Plato's Philosophy', Journal of Religious Ethics, 13 (1985), 312–31; H. Merki, Homoiosis theoi: Von der platonischen Angleichung an Gott zur Gott•ahnlichkeit bei Gregor von Nyssa (Freiburg, 1952); and C. G. Rutenber, The Doctrine of the Imitation of God in Plato (New York, 1946).

[159] By sensible world, I mean the physical world that is paralleled to human society in the Laozi part.

[160] Armstrong, J. (2004). After the Ascent: Plato on Becoming Like God. *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 26:171-183, p.171.

[161] Chapter 39 昔之得一者:天得一以清;地得一以寧;神得一以靈;谷得一以盈;萬物得一以生;侯王得 一以為天下貞。其致之，天無以清，將恐裂;地無以寧，將恐發;神無以靈，將恐歇;谷無 以盈，將恐竭;萬物無以生，將恐滅;侯王無以貴高將恐蹶。故貴以賤為本，

mentioned in the last chapter, appears in the *Laozi* as 治 *zhi*, which is normally correlated to a political sense. I use the term order (*zhi*) here in both political and natural senses, since in chapter 39[162] that is how they are portrayed with the feature of each entity appearing in their best state as clear 清, heaven 天, quietness 宁 earth 地, and well-ordered 貞 *zhen* for the world 天下.

My belief on the relevance of the teleology of nature for the *Laozi* and Plato is that having gone through the formation of education or cultivation for the moral agent, they aim to achieve the highest good as their *telo* of human life, an approach that will likely be challenged by others. Kant clearly takes a different stance when he argues that mankind is not only the means of anything, but also the end in themselves, since all humans are rational autonomous beings capable of making decisions for themselves. He argues that people "act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end and never simply as a

高以下為基。 是以侯王自稱孤、寡、不穀。此非以賤為本耶?非乎?故致數譽無譽。不欲琭琭如玉，珞珞 如石。

The origin of the law, The things which from of old have got the One (the Dao) are the Heaven which by it is bright and pure; Earth rendered thereby firm and sure; Spirits with powers by it supplied; Valleys kept full throughout their void. All creatures which through it do live Princes and kings who from it get. The model which to all they give. All these are the results of the One (*Dao*). If heaven were not thus pure, it soon would rend; If earth were not thus sure, 'would break and bend; Without these powers, the spirits soon would fail; If not so filled, the drought would parch each vale; Without that life, creatures would pass away; Princes and kings, without that moral sway, However grand and high, would all decay. Thus it is that dignity finds its (firm) root in its (previous) meanness, and what is lofty finds its stability in the lowness (from which it rises). Hence princes and kings call themselves 'Orphans,' 'Men of small virtue,' and as 'Carriages without a nave.' Is not this an acknowledgment that in their considering themselves mean they see the foundation of their dignity? So it is that in the enumeration of the different parts of a carriage we do not come on what makes it answer the ends of a carriage. They do not wish to show themselves elegant-looking as jade, but (prefer) to be coarse-looking as an (ordinary) stone. (Translated by James Legge)

[162] Ibid.

means."[163] As we can see, Kant's understanding of the highest good differs from Plato and the *Laozi* in that he thinks that the good will of the moral agent is an unchanging good, however, the unchanging good for the *Laozi* and Plato are the *dao* and the cosmic soul respectively. Kant argues: "… in this way, there arises the idea of a two-fold metaphysic — a metaphysic of nature and a metaphysic of morals. Physics, therefore, will have an empirical part and also a rational part, and ethical likewise, though here the empirical part may be called more specifically 'practical anthropology' and the rational part 'morals' in the strict sense. … Nothing in the world — or out of it — can possibly be conceived that could be called 'good' without qualification except a good will."[164] In this passage, he notes that only the good will of the moral agent is an unchanging good and everything else apart from the good will can be morally bad. To take an example, we say that mental talent has instrumental value, but it also can be used as a morally bad function if there is no good will behind it. The same could apply to other aspects, such as external good and so on. Nevertheless, if we accept the premise that good will is good for its own sake, could the fulfilment of duties be derived from anything else apart from good will? Yes. It is possible or highly possible that the moral agent fulfils the duties without any good will. For example, a teacher may teach for the sake of their salary rather than recognising and fulfilling a duty to educate students.

However, the highest good in the *Laozi* and Plato is different from Kant's concept of "the unchanging good" since, in both, it possesses the transcendent sources of the cosmos and the principles of the world respectively that human beings aim to emulate.[165] The final moral goal for Plato (becoming as godlike as possible) points human beings in the direction of a certain way of life that

[163] Kant, I., Gregor, M., & Timmermann, J., (2013). *Groundwork of the metaphysics of morals* (Rev. edition / translation rev. by Jens Timmermann ed., Cambridge texts in the history of philosophy). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.90.

[164] Kant, Groundworks of the metaphysics of the ethics, chapter 1.

[165] The higher authority in Plato is presented as the cosmic soul in the *Timaeus* and the one is the *dao* in the *Laozi*, as we can see in chapter 51.

should be lived during their lifespan. Plato has addressed '*homoiosis theoi*' in different dialogues and various places, such as the *Phaedo* 69c, 81a, the *Symposium* 207c-209e, the *Theaetetus'* digression 176e-177a, the *Republic* 613a-b, the *Phaedrus* 252c-253c, and the *Timaeus* 29e. In the *Phaedrus*, a passage reveals a close connection between mortal creatures, including human beings, and gods. Plato dramatises a scene where human beings achieve the final moral goal through the embodied human souls growing wings once they get *as close as possible to the gods*, as seen in the passage: "For just this reason it is fair that only a philosopher's soul grows wings, since its memory always keeps it as close as possible to those realities by being close to which the gods are divine. A man who uses reminders of these things correctly is always at the highest, most perfect level of initiation, and he is the only one who is perfect as perfect can be." (the *Phaedrus* 249 c5-8). This passage illustrates the procedure of achieving the final moral goal for the moral agent – the philosopher. As we can see, one of the essential activities practiced by philosophers during their lives is recollection, because *via* the procedure, the disembodied soul of the philosopher encounters the Forms as the right food and drink. The more the disembodied soul has encountered the Forms, leads to more nourishment and cultivation, fuelling the philosophers to think abstractly, which leads the soul to get closer to the gods. Plato notes that the rational accounts of likening the soul of gods and the way of nourishing and cultivating the soul is the best way for human beings to get "the soul back to where all gods dwell (the *Phaedrus* 246 d10)". [166]

The *Laozi* notes that the sequence of the imitations of the principles among humans, heaven, earth and the *dao* have to be understood as a process of the imitation of the principles from humans to the *dao*. I argue that the *dao* is the highest authority and the final moral goal in the *Laozi* and, indeed, the *Laozi* claims in chapter 25 that the *dao* is the highest authority and its principles are

[166] Nehamas, A., & Woodruff, P. (1995). *Phaedrus*. Indianapolis, Ind. ; Cambridge: Hackett, p.22.

the highest to be emulated.[167] Certainly, there is a counter-argument that the term – *dao* – is multivalent in the *Laozi* and it is therefore misguided to make such a general claim that the *dao* is the highest authority and the final moral goal.[168] To support my argument I will conduct a detailed analysis of the concept of the *dao* later in this chapter to show why the *dao* is the highest authority that the moral agent can achieve in the *Laozi*. Briefly I highlight two reasons to defend my position. First, the aforementioned chapter 25 explicitly reveals the process of the imitation of the principles from the lower part to the higher part, although the typological interpretation of the *dao* has a long history, and I do not attempt to deduce such a broad claim out of one chapter.[169] Second, the correlated traits of the *dao* are discursively expressed for the purpose of being emulated by the moral agent. For example, the idea of possessing the *dao* as the ideal state for the moral agent — the rulers — as the manifestation of the traits of the *dao,* such as to not contend 不争 *buzheng*, 無為 *wuwei* and so on. Chapter 81 states that "聖人之道，為而不爭。the *dao* of the sage, to act but not to contend." shares the same traits of the *dao* of heaven in chapter 73, "the *dao* of heaven, it is good at winning in virtue of not-contending 天之道，不爭而善勝". as well as in chapter 2, "the sage acts the affairs of *wuwei*, and does the wordless teaching 是以聖人處無為之事，行不言之教" shares the traits of *wuwei* with the *dao* in chapter 37, "道常無為而無不

[167] "道大，天大，地大，王亦大。域中有四大，而王居其一焉。人法地，地法天，天法道，道法 自然。 The *dao* is great, heaven is great, earth is great, and the emperor is great. In the territories, there are four greats, the emperor is one of them. The human emulates the earth, the earth emulates the heaven, the heaven emulates the *dao*, the *dao* emulates what it is itself."

[168] Thanks to my internal examiner of PhD viva, Dr. Curie Virág. She raises up this dispute. It is a sharp point that pushes me to round up my argument.

[169] Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2015). *Thematic Analyses of the Laozi BT - Dao Companion to Daoist Philosophy* (X. Liu (ed.); pp. 47–70, pp. 48-51. Csikszentmihalyi's paper has done a detailed work on listing and organising the substantial typological interpretation of the *dao* in western world.

為 the *dao* always acts *wuwei* and there is nothing undone." Thus, not only is the teleology of Plato and the *Laozi* different from Kant's view that the highest authority for mankind is mankind themselves, but, for each, the emulation of the higher authority denotes that the final goal of the moral agent would more clearly and better help them construct their own ways of life and guide how they will make decisions.

In the philosophical systems of both Plato and the *Laozi*, the highest authority represents the highest ethical good, in Plato it is the soul, and in the *Laozi* it is the *dao*, with each functioning as the foundation of the whole cosmos and representing the highest good to pursue.[170] However, it is important to investigate how these principles are adopted and applied to the moral agents in human society and assimilated by them. The possession of the highest ethical good is exhibited by moral agents demonstrating an understanding of the metaphysical doctrines, adopting them into their lives and utilising them in the way they live their lives. I shall argue in the following sections that the soul and the *dao* respectively are the ultimate good for moral agents to achieve, since Plato believes that the best life or the highest goodness is to live as godlike as possible, and the *Laozi* asserts that the best life to live is one in

[170] Although we can find that there is a highest ethical good in both Plato and the *Laozi*, I do not suggest that the *Laozi* contains a parallel concept to *eudaimonia* in Plato. There are no such direct and categorical concepts conveyed and formulated in the text of the *Laozi*. However, a well-formulated concept does not necessarily have to be expressed by a specific term. For example, Plato claims that the best life is to live like gods as much as possible to pursue *eudaimonia*, which, etymologically, contains the implication of living like gods; on the other hand, it takes, for a moral agent, a significant portion of their lives to cultivate their souls and complete the journey of getting their souls back to the place where gods live. The highest ethical good in the *Laozi* is that the moral agent lives in human society in accordance with the *dao*. Living in accordance with the *dao* means that the moral agent treats the *dao* as the guiding principles in their way of living and acting, the procedure of making decisions and the means of participating in the events in their lives. Before moving on to and wrestling with the discussion of the final moral goal, it is necessary to discuss the soul in Plato and the *dao* in the *Laozi* from which the final moral goals develop.

accord with the *dao*. In each respective philosophical system, humans as the moral agent need to either get the rational soul into the right motion for Plato or follow the *dao* to guide decision making and actions for the *Laozi*.

Having demonstrated that the *Laozi* and Plato advocate the moral agent to emulate the higher authorities of the *dao* and the cosmic soul respectively, in the following two sections I examine the nature of the *dao* and the cosmic soul and their relationship with the moral agent. The *Laozi* demonstrates a hierarchical ranking of emulation from human being (人 *ren*) to the *dao*, as aforementioned,[171] whereas Plato claims that "whenever the Demiurge looks at what is always changeless and, using a thing of that kind as his model, reproduces its form and character, then, of necessity, all that he so completes is beautiful" (*Timaeus* 27e-28a). Thus, the first question which needs addressing is what are the *dao* and the cosmic soul?

2.2 The Three-Folds of the *Dao*

Scholars have explored the *Laozi* using different concepts. For example, Liu Xiaogan starts his research of the *Laozi* from what he calls the 'core value', the concept of *ziran* 自然.[172] My research of the ethics of the *Laozi* starts from the concept of the *dao*, because at some point the *dao* either needs to be considered or becomes the foundation of other concepts. I disagree with Liu Xiaogan's argument that the *dao* follows the value of *ziran*, because *ziran* is one of the principles of the *dao* manifested in human society. The *Laozi* follows only one rule to demonstrate the absolute *dao per se* as a non-physical

[171] Chapter 25, 道大，天大，地大，王亦大。域中有四大，而王居其一焉。人法地，地法天，天法道，道法 自然。 The *dao* is great, heaven is great, earth is great, and the emperor is great too. In the territories, there are four greats, the emperor is one of them. The human emulates the earth, the earth emulates the heaven, the heaven emulates the *dao*, the *dao* emulates what it is itself

[172] Liu, Xiaogan. (2014) *"Laozi's Philosophy: Textual and Conceptual Analyses*" ed. in *Dao Companion to Daoist Philosophy*. Berlin: Springer, in Dao Companions to Chinese Philosophy, p. 72. I do not agree that *ziran* is the core value in the *Laozi* since it is presented as a mode rather than a value in other chapters such as chapter 17 百姓皆曰："我自然".

existence which cannot be perceived and expressed.[173] The *dao* can take on many manifestations in human society, such as principles and beings, and such manifestations can be perceived, articulated and expressed, but they are not the absolute *dao*. That is to say, there is a paradox formulated in the *Laozi* that on one hand it attempts to express and describe what the *dao* is, but on the other hand, it implies that the *dao* at the macro level is the totality of the world with non-physical properties. In addition, the *dao* has the attributes of transiency, limitlessness and ineffability.[174] I argue that the *dao* in the *Laozi* manifests itself in three forms, which are the ideal, ideal-like, and human reality. The final goal of the moral agent is to emulate the *dao* at the ideal level and in so doing achieve the ideal-like state at best. Put another way, the best that rulers in human society can become is sage-like, since the sage is associated with the *dao* at the ideal level and rulers can never reach sage status. I suggest that we can illustrate the images of the three-fold *Weltanschauungen*, which are *Weltanschauungen related to* the *dao* at the ideal level, the one related to the *dao* at the ideal-like level and the one related to the *dao* in human reality. Based on this hypothesis of the three-fold of *dao*, I will argue that to achieve the higher authority the moral agent must live in accordance with the *dao.*

I am not the first to consider the different aspects of the *dao* in the *Laozi*, and as mentioned above, there are many typological interpretations of the *dao*. Historically, the tradition to interpret the *Laozi* as a twofold Mystery (*chongxuan pai* 重玄派) by adopting a Buddhist teaching method can be traced back to the Tang Dynasty. This school of thought encompasses religion and philosophy including the realms of ontology, cosmology and political philosophy. It argues that there are two kinds of truth following the *tetra lemma* method, the worldly truth and the absolute truth "depending on the capacity and the spiritual state

[173] I follow scholars, such as Chen Guying etc., to name the ineffable *dao* as the absolute *dao*, and the *dao* that can be articulated is named as the ordinary *dao*. (To see the book: Chen Guying 陈鼓应, 2006, *Laozi Zhuyi yu Pingji*e 老子注释与评介, Zhonghua shuju 中華书局.)
[174] To see the *Laozi*, Chapter 14.

of any being".[175] The moral agent has to first attain the worldly truth, in order to be able to attain the absolute truth. Scholars like *Cheng Xuanying* and Livia Kohn believe that the *Laozi* reveals the same doctrines from the first chapter and also, that the sage is the only one who has attained the absolute truth. As the exemplary figure in the *Laozi*, the sage, by attaining the worldly truth is able to pass knowledge to people, and by attaining the absolute truth attains the absolute dao.[176]

The typological interpretations of the *dao* has a long history. Liu Xiaogan has identified four categories of interpretation of the *dao*. The first interpretation is that of Benjamin Schwartz and others who assert that the *dao* is the metaphysical Reality (Schwartz, further argues Daoism to be mysticism).[177] The second interpretation is that of Chen Guying and Charles Fu where, according to Chen Guying, the *dao* has to be understood in three dimensions including the metaphysical aspect, the phenomenon aspect and the application of the *dao*[178]: and Charles Fu considers the *dao* as non-dualistic and non-conceptual metaphysics.[179] The third interpretation is that of Mou Zongsan - the *dao* is the metaphysics as the consideration of vision contrasting with the metaphysics as the consideration of being. The fourth interpretation is that of Yuan Baoxin – the *dao* is the metaphysical basis of the value world.[180]

[175] Assandri, F (2009). *Beyond the Daode Jing: Twofold Mystery in Tang Daoism*. Three Pines Press, p.2

[176] Ibid, p. 1-8.

[177] Schwartz, B.I., 1985. *The world of thought in ancient China*, Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, p. 193.

[178] Chen, G. & Laozi, 2006. *Laozi jin zhu jin yi ji ping jie* , Taibei: *Taiwan shang wu yin shu guan*.

[179] Wei-Hsun Fu, C., 1973. *Lao Tzu's conception of Tao*. *Inquiry*, 16(1-4), pp.367–394.

[180] Liu, X 劉笑敢, 2009, *Interpretation and Orientation* 詮釋與定向, *shang wu yin shu guan*.The reason I will follow Liu *Xiaogan's* work is because he does not overlook either the Chinese scholarships or the modern western scholarships, which makes his work an extraordinary useful literature review.

My interpretation synthesises and adds to Chen Guying's and Charles Fu's interpretations of the notion of the *dao,* and presents a systematic interpretation of the discursive connotations of the notion of the *dao*.[181] Taking Charles Fu's arguments as an example, not only does he represent the typological interpretation using his analytical elucidation of the *dao*, but also he criticises the argument that the *dao* has attributes or properties. He notes that all the principles are depicted as different perspectives of the *dao* which is considered as non-conceptualised, non-dualistic metaphysical symbols.[182] I agree with Fu that the *dao* in the *Laozi* is functioning as a symbol conceiving the package of the attributes and the principles[183]. However, if the *dao* is not merely a symbol, we need to consider what the sense and referent of this symbol are? For example, in the case of the technology company Apple, the Apple logo is the symbol, which refers to the whole company and its products as the referents. Fu argues that the *dao* is a symbol without admitting there is a referent, which seems odd that a symbol without a referent has 6 perspectives.[184] As we can see in chapter 25, the term "a thing" 物 *wu* is used as the referent of the *dao.*[185]

Having examined historical scholarly approaches to the typological interpretation of the *dao*, in the following section I will elucidate my interpretation of the *dao* in the *Laozi,* in which I argue there is actually a three-fold *Weltanschauungen*. I intend to confirm my hypothesis of three-fold *Weltanschauung* by elucidating the *dao* at the ideal level, the *dao* at the ideal-like level, and the *dao* in human reality.

[181] Chen, 2006 & Fu, 1973.

[182] Wei-Hsun Fu, C. (1973). Lao Tzu's conception of Tao. *Inquiry, 16*(1-4), 367-394, p 367.

[183] Chapters 14,25,24 etc.

[184] Chen, 2006.

[185] Chapter 25 有物混成，先天地生。there is a thing mixed and produced, that is born before the birth of heaven and earth.

First, I start with an assertion from my interpretation of the three-fold *dao* that it is correlated with *Weltanschauung*. I suggest that an ideal blueprint of the cosmos is depicted in accordance with the *dao* and the image of the sage is depicted as the ideal for rulers and other moral agents to emulate. The *dao* in the *Laozi* is omnipotent, everlasting (久 *jiu*) and forever good, and at the metaphysical level it produces 生 *sheng* everything in the cosmos by means of *wuwei*. The sage who possesses the *dao* and lives *perfectly* in accordance with it is living at the ideal *dao* level. Nevertheless, the *Laozi* discusses the practical implementation of the *dao* at the ideal level in human society, which can only be akin to the *dao* at the ideal-like level since the *dao* at the ideal level consists of traits that are unattainable for human beings, such as eternal life (久 *jiu*). As chapter 23 claims: "A violent wind does not last for a whole morning; a sudden rain does not last for the whole day. To whom is it that these (two) things are owing? To Heaven and Earth. If Heaven and Earth cannot make such (spasmodic) actings last long, how much less can man!"[186] This passage employs metaphorical speech to depict that if the actions of heaven and earth cannot last long, then what hope does man have of reaching an everlasting (久 *jiu*) state, which is one of the traits of the *dao* at the ideal level.

In the text of the *Laozi*, we can find that the repertoire of linguistic tools, such as metaphorical speech, figurative speech, parallelisms and analogous reasoning etc. is employed to elaborate discursively the unreachable *dao* at the ideal level. Some may question the point of the *Laozi,* comprising a text of approximately 5000 words, trying to disclose unreachable, ineffable concepts as told by the text itself, particularly as it starts with "the *dao* that can be spoken is not the absolute *dao*".[187] So whilst necessary, how would it be possible to

[186] Chapter 23 故飄風不終朝，驟雨不終日。孰為此者？天地。天地尚不能久，而況於人乎? The translation is quoted from James Legg's translation.

[187] For example, Bai Juyi 白居易 writes a poem to satirise the *Laozi*, saying that: "言者不如知者默，此语吾闻于老君。若道老君是知者，缘何自著五千文。One who speaks knows

disclose, discuss and evaluate the *dao* and other related concepts? [188] The *dao* is a notoriously difficult concept in the *Laozi* as it is supposed to be the basis of everything in terms of both materials and principles, but the concept *per se* is ineffable.

The *dao* at the ideal level is depicted in the *Laozi* as that everything can function in its own way or *so-itself*, which is termed *ziran* 自然, which is said to be the natural, unmolested way. [189] This assertion is challenged because of the way in which the *Laozi* does not evaluate the *dao* or any related aspects to be ideal. Scholars like Chen Guying and Benjamin Schwartz argue that the *dao* in this case should be the metaphysical reality, which means that they recognise the *dao* to be the metaphysical being without any ineffable and unperceivable traits.[190] However, my interpretation does not agree that there is a sense of the *dao* as the metaphysical being, but rather I want to interpret it as an ideal *Weltanschauung* formulated and regulated by the *dao* at the ideal level, and which in this *Weltanschauung* there is no need of commanding rulers but rather the sage (*shengren)* who is driven by desirelessness (無欲 *wuyu)* and motivation to guide the (民 *7*) masses. In this manner of speaking, the key concepts such as the sage (*shengren* 聖人), desirelessness (*wuyu)* etc., are connected under the situation of an ideal *Weltanschauung*.

By interweaving these concepts discursively, I argue that the detection of the ideal *Weltanschauung* can be demonstrated by the analysis of the notion of *wuwei*. The term *wuwei* appears eleven times in the *Laozi* and is subject to

not, they who know is mute. These are the words, I'm heard, from *Laozi*. But if it be said that *Laozi* was one who truly knew, why did he write a thousand words text?"

[188] Chapter 1 道可道，非常道

[189] Möller, 2006, p. 50

[190] Chen, 2006, p. 1-3; Schwartz, B.I., 1985, p. 193. Chen specifically indicates the dao as the metaphysical being without ineffable and unperceivable traits can be inferred from chapter 14 and 25.

four kinds of agencies, namely the *dao*, the *de*, the sage and 'I'.[191] The consequences of *wuwei* conducted by the *dao*, the *de*, the sage and 'I' are different, which contrasts those notions, such as the *dao*, the sage and the *de*, related to the ideal *Weltanschauung* with the one, 'I', related to the reality of *Weltanschauung* in human society. In chapter 37 the *Laozi* notes that the *dao* merely implements *wuwei* [192] to be necessary to be able to complete everything; and in chapter 38 it notes that the *de* 德, as mentioned in the last chapter, with the implementation of *wuwei*, does not need to do anything 無以為 *wuyiwei*; and the sage, by implementing *wuwei,* can achieve the state of *wubai* 無败 non-defeat in chapter 64.[193] In chapter 37, the *dao* is depicted as the ideal and highest achievement.[194] The ideal image of the *Weltanschauung* functions in its own way in accordance with the *dao*, it is self-corrected 自正 *zizheng*, self-settled 自定 *ziding*, self-calmed 自静 *zijing*, and self-transformed 自化 *zihua*[195].These traits are the natural state of an entity if it follows the *dao,* since self 自 *zi* in these chapters implies there is no external interference from anything else, but it causes, acts and completes spontaneously out of itself.

Some may challenge that I am contradicting myself because in the first chapter I argued that the consequences are in fact in the crisis between the *dao* acting *wuwei* and the sage acting *wuwei*. However, here I consider the *dao* and the sage acting *wuwei* to be the same to contrast with *wuwei* conducted by human

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[191] Chapter 43, I know hereby what advantage belongs to doing nothing (with a purpose). 吾是以知無為之有益。

[192] I will analyse the concept of *wuwei* in chapter 3 in detail in the aspects of what *wuwei* is and how to achieve *wuwei*. I will argue that the moral agent can only achieve completely *wuwei* in the state of *wuyu* 無欲 no desire.

[193] Chapter 38 上德無為而無以為; Chapter 64 是以聖人無為故無敗。

[194] Chapter 37 道常無為而無不為。侯王若能守之，萬物將自化。化而欲作，吾將鎮之以無名之樸。無名之樸，夫亦將無欲。不欲以靜，天下將自定。The *dao* consistently acts non-action *Wuwei*, thus there is nothing that cannot be achieved by it. If the dukes can behold the *dao*, then ten thousands of things can be self-transformed. Having transformed, it desires to interfere (other), I will press it down with the nameless simplicity. The nameless simplicity, that is also about to clear its desire (be in the status of the no desires). Do not desire is for the tranquilness, the world under the heaven will be self- settled.

[195] Ibid.

beings “I 吾 *wu*”, which justifies the discrepancy between the ideal and the reality in the *Laozi*. I defend myself from the challenge of contradiction in two ways. First, the argument in the first chapter is still valid, because judging by the consequences of acting *wuwei* by the *dao*, the *de* and the sage, the consequences are in crisis from nothing can be left undone 無不為 *wubuwei* to no defeat 無敗 *wubai*. Nothing can be left undone 無不為 *wubuwei* indicates the inherent omnipotence of the *dao* in the *Laozi*. However, no defeat 無敗 *wubai* does not have the omnipotence as the *dao* does, rather it merely possesses the capability of triumph in combat. Second, the *dao*, the *de* and the sage can be grouped together to be contrasted with human beings in terms of the discrepancy of the *Weltanschauung*, because in the situation that the sage is the exemplar model who fully embodies the *dao* is ideal, the evidence can be seen in chapters 22, 24, and 72, that the action of not displaying themselves 不自见 *buzijian* is conducted by the sage, which is the same action as performed by the *dao*. In chapter 24, the *Laozi* notes that “*they who display themselves do not shine; they who assert their own views are not distinguished; they who vaunt themselves do not find their merit acknowledged; they who are self-conceited have no superiority allowed to them. Such conditions, viewed from the standpoint of the dao, are like remnants of food, or a tumour on the body, which all dislike*.”.[196] From this passage, we can see the dislike to self-display 自见 *zijian* becomes the act of not displaying themselves 不自见 *buzijian* to indicate that the *dao* promotes the action of not displaying themselves, which is a characteristic of the sage. Furthermore, *wuwei* is conducted by the *dao* consistently, while the ideal situation in human society — the ten thousand things (萬物 *wanwu*)— is that self-transformation can be achieved through following the actions of the *dao*. Through this contrast, the *Laozi* proposes a kind of cosmos that can be self-regulated 自定 *ziding*. Human society, which is created 作 *zuo* after the self-

[196] Chapter 24 自見者不明；自是者不彰；自伐者無功；自矜者不長。其在道也，曰：餘食贅行。

transformed ten thousand things, does not possess desires, the possession of which would arouse the moral agent to go against the principles of the *dao*. Thus, in this ideal world with the *dao* acting *wuwei* consistently, having been self-transformed, the ten thousand things will be self-regulated due to the desireless *dao*. In conclusion, it is important to recognise that the ideal notion of the *dao* and its corresponding concepts, such as *wuwei,* and *wuyu* can be used in both ideal and practical senses, which makes interpretation of the *Laozi* more difficult. Nevertheless, the *dao* in the ideal outlook and the corresponding concepts are demonstrated in the *Laozi* by means of displaying the best consequences of acting *wuwei* in human society.

As discussed in chapter one, the sage is the ideal exemplary figure for all to emulate. The text of the *Laozi* hints many times that it is impossible for any entity to reach the ideal, at best it can only reach as close as possible to the *dao's* ideal level. For example, in chapter 8, the *Laozi* notes that water possesses the highest good, but merely approaches very close to the *dao.*[197] Thus, the *Laozi* on the one hand recites that 'the *dao* that can be spoken is not the absolute *dao*',[198] suggesting reaching the *dao* is unattainable. On the other hand, the text of the *Laozi* acts as a bridge between the unattainable ideal and what an ordinary mortal can achieve. Conceptually, the *Laozi* describes a 'likely truth' or 'likely outlook' (which can be compared to Plato's allegory of the cave and *Timaeus's* speech on the creation of the cosmos "the likely truth") being really close to the ideal weaved by the ideal concepts, such as the *dao* and the concepts corresponding to it like *wuyu*, *wuwei*, *ziran* and so on, by means of the rhetorical repertoire, such as metaphors, analogies, and dialectical speeches.

In the *Laozi*, the *Weltanschauung* at ideal-like level is revealed in a very subtle way. The moral agent at the ideal-like level, would recognise that it is impossible to reach the *dao* at the ideal level. The masses would live 'stupidly

[197] Chapter 8 上善若水…幾於道。

[198] Chapter 1.

愚 *yu*'[199], and the ruler would be like the sage who does not interfere in anything. However, in this outlook, because it is impossible to be completely free of desires, 無欲 *wuyu,* it is only possible for the sage to have few desires 寡欲 *guayu*, or to not desire 不欲 *buyu*, which refers to an effort made not to desire but does not guarantee that the moral agent can be truly in the mode of desirelessness. In this ideal-like outlook, the moral agent holds the traits of the *dao* and acts accordingly. Scholars have long overlooked and aggregated these different levels of possession of desires. However, to have few desires, *guayu,* cannot be equated to a complete lack of desires, *wuyu*, or to not desire, *buyu*. (for detailed discussion of desires see chapter 3).

Instances of signifiers in the *Laozi* signpost the *Weltanschauung* at ideal-like level, such as few 寡 *gua*, near/almost 幾 *ji* and like 若 *ruo*. In the *Weltanschauung* at ideal-like level, the *Laozi* employs the term "like 若 *ruo*" to describe the images or concepts which are akin to the *dao*, such as the image of the person who is good at living in accordance with the *dao* in chapter 15. Since the *Laozi* is sceptical about language and the capability of language to manifest the truth, it seeks to demonstrate the image of the concept. The term "若 *ruo*" has three usages in the *Laozi* as "akin to", "seem like" or "a condition 'if'". The utilisation of "akin to" appears on other occasions in chapters 8, 20, and 60. An analogy is conducted between before and after the parts of the term "若 *ruo*". The former part of "若 *ruo*", is the essential concept or image that the *Laozi* wishes to depict. For example, in chapter 8, 上善若水 *the highest good is like water*, the *Laozi* reveals the essential nature of the *highest good* 上善 by means of the analogy of the nature of water, where water does not have any shape but takes on the form of the container it is in; 'it is very soft, but is able to conquer the hard stone'. I have demonstrated that there are three kinds of moral agents - the sage, sage-like rulers and rulers. The sage-like ruler is the bridge between the sage, as the ideal exemplar figure who does not possess any desires and can act *wuwei,* and the rulers, who possess

[199] Chapter 65

desires to rule the masses and their states well and to conquer and enlarge their states.[200] Thus, it is clear that there would be a model of principles demonstrated by the sage, which are for sage-like rulers who are the ideal like rulers and the rulers to emulate and apply to real human society.

The process of assimilation of goodness of mankind to the profundity of the *dao* is the way in which the moral agent can achieve the final moral goal. The *dao* in the *Laozi* as the highest authority possesses the ultimate source and the ultimate principles that *are* beyond the cognition of humans, thus the *Laozi* claims that it is forced to give its name (强之為名) and to depict the image of the person who possesses it. The sage who possesses the *dao* and lives accordingly becomes the final moral goal for general moral agents to pursue. The *Laozi* connects the features of the *dao* to the features of the image of the moral agent who possesses the *dao* and acts accordingly. The linkage between the *dao* and the moral agent who possesses the *dao* (古之善為道者) or the sage demonstrates the process for general moral agents to emulate.

It seems clear that none of the features of the *dao,* including such things as its name, nature, or the image of the person who possesses it, can be precisely recognised or perceived. Once the *dao* at the ideal level is described by language, its essence is lost, so the term "强 *qiang* is forced to"[201] is used to clarify that the language it uses and the image it depicts are akin to the ideal but never would be identical to the ideal. Thus, in chapter 15 it is obvious that the person who is good at following the *dao* possesses a similar outlook of the *dao*, such as "微妙玄通，深不可識。(they were) minute and wonderful, profound and penetrated; were too abstruse to be recognised". The term "微

[200] this may seem to go against the philosophy of the *Laozi*, but the *Laozi* states it in chapter 36 that "將欲取之，必先與之。if one desires to take over it, she must offer in advance". This chapter relates to the realistic human society thanks to the use of '欲 *yu*', since the *dao* and the sage are in the mode of desirelessness 無欲 *wuyu*. I will go through the relation between human motives and human action in detail in the next chapter.

[201] "强 *qiang* is forced to" is used in used on two occasions, chapter 15 and 25. In chapter 15, the *Laozi* is forced to depict the appearance of the person who contains the *dao*; and in chapter 25, the *Laozi* is forced to give a name of the *dao*. 夫唯不可識，故強為之容。(chapter 15) 吾不知其名，字之曰道，強為之名曰大。(chapter 25)

minute" in chapter 14 is used as one of the features of the *dao*, the intangibility.[202] The terms 妙 "*wonderfulness*" and 玄 "*profundity*" appear in many chapters in tandem with discussions of the *dao*, such as in chapter 1 where it states that the two sides of the *dao* could be called 玄 profundity with different names. These two names are mutually interwoven and emerge from the same source, the whole process as the gate of wonderfulness 妙 *rather* appears as more and more 玄 profundity.[203] Since these traits are all characteristics of the *dao* that cannot be recognised by human senses, anyone who possesses the *dao* can also not be recognised, not in the sense of material existence, but rather in the sense that the one who possesses the *dao* cannot be distinguished from the masses by appearance. Thus, the *Laozi* is forced to depict the behaviours of one possessing the *dao*, by manoeuvering those nearly indescribable features of the person who possesses the *dao* by employing similes, such as "若冬涉川 like crossing the river in winter" for "豫兮 reluctant" and "若冰之將釋 like ice that is about to melt away" for "渙兮 dissipated". The *Laozi* sets a goal for the moral agent by means of depicting the ideal image of the person who possesses the *dao*. Although in real human society it would be impossible for the moral agent to be identical to the ideal image of the person who possesses the *dao*, the moral agent can seek to be akin to the ideal-like as possible.

Apart from the moral agent, in real human society, there are also entities which are in the *Weltanschauung* at ideal-like level, such as water 水 *shui*. The water in the *Laozi* is supposed to be the entity holding the features of the *dao* and manifesting them.[204] Even though the water manifests the aforementioned features of the *dao*, it would only reach the state of near (幾 *ji*) to the *dao*.

[202] 搏之不得，名曰微。to touch but cannot be touched, that is named as the minute. I will give a full elaboration of the reason why *xi*, *yi*, *wei* are three features of the *dao* in chapter 14.
[203] Chapter 1 此兩者，同出而異名，同謂之玄。玄之又玄，衆妙之門。These two, (they) come out from the same one with different names, both can be called as profundity. More and more profundity, that is the gate of the various wonderfulness.
[204] Chapter 43 天下之至柔，馳騁天下之至堅。 The softest in the world would conquer and overcome the hardest in the world.

However, I do not propose that the *Laozi* is pessimistic about the capability of humans and real human society, but rather it displays a possibility that for humans and the real human society it could be possible to reach the *Weltanschauung* at ideal-like level close to the *dao* in a similar way water is close to the *dao*. It would be impossible to know, to tell and to reach the *dao* and to be in the *Weltanschauung* at ideal level, but the *Weltanschauung* at ideal-like level can be achieved. In chapter 8, just as in real human society, water manifests what the *dao* would appear like, but the best it can be is being ideal-like, and it will never be identical to the *dao*.

Nevertheless, the thoughts of real human society are always displayed in the *Laozi*, and the political issues of real human society are concerns to be resolved for the *Laozi*. The approach used by the *Laozi* is to advise the moral agent to work towards achieving as close as possible to the ideal-like condition. The *Laozi* argues that the ruled should live a good life and enjoy their work, and the politics of the states should be stable and peaceful. In order to rule the ruled and the states well, sage-like rulers shall abandon the conventional social and moral values such as wisdom 聖 *sheng*, benevolence 仁 *ren* for the benefit of the ruled, because these conventional values can give rise to unnecessary desires for both rulers and the ruled. Those unnecessary human desires are the root of chaos at different levels, i.e. at state level, they incite wars; at individual level, they lead to scheming against each other; at society level, they cause instability. As chapter 19 declares, the best conditions are to give up wisdom, benevolence, justice, cleverness and benefits, to provide maximum benefit for the ruled people.[205] In order to achieve this (giving up

[205] Chapter 19 絕聖棄智，民利百倍;絕仁棄義，民復孝慈;絕巧棄利，盜賊無有。此三者以為文不足。故令有所屬:見素抱樸，少私寡欲。To cut off sagacity and give up the wisdom, the people would be benefited a hundredfold; to cut off benevolence and give up justice, the people would go back to filiality and parental affection; to cut off cleverness and give up benefits, thieves would be gone. These three things are not sufficient for taking it as a pattern. Thus, to order them to have belonged: to display the pureness and to hold the simplicity, to lessen your concern to yourself and reduce the desires.

those qualities), the moral agent shall reduce their desires and lessen their self-awareness. Not only is it obvious that those qualities are what the Confucianists advocate pursuing, but they are also the conventional virtues for the moral agent in ancient China. First of all, the ideal condition for the *Laozi* is having no desires 無欲 *wuyu;* by contrast, in real human society, the achievement of no desires is impossible for the moral agent.[206] Thus, the *Laozi* employs the term 寡 *gua* to create a state of few desires instead of implementing no desires (無欲 *wuyu*), since the moral agent cannot rid themselves of born bodily desires, but can reduce them to basic needs. Secondly, at the level of society, the rulers are also able to cut off the inclination to chase qualities such as wisdom, benevolence, justice and so on because these desires cause many issues and are taken as signs that the *dao* has perished as chapter 18 reveals.[207]

Having explained the *Weltanschauung* at the ideal and ideal-like levels I now turn to articulating the *Weltanschauung* in human reality. I suggest that an analysis of chapter 36 shows that the *Laozi* attempts to provide an approach which assimilates the principles of the *dao* to the moral agent and teaches them how to achieve that which they desire. Furthermore, analysis of this chapter tells us that the final moral goal in the *Laozi* is to live in accordance with the *dao*. Whilst this may seem a bit of a cliché, it is important because the reason there is a discrepancy between the *dao* in real human society and the *dao* at ideal level is the way the *dao* conducts itself at ideal level is by being itself, whereas human society only mimics the *dao* at ideal level and may still

[206] I will give a full elaboration on his point in chapter 3 in my discussion on the human motivation. There are different kinds of motivations and desires in the *Laozi*, but in the real human world, it is impossible for the moral agent to have no desires since for any moral agent, she cannot escape the born bodily desires.

[207] Chapter 18 大道廢，有仁義;智慧出，有大偽;六親不和，有孝慈;國家昏亂，有忠臣。 The great *dao* is perished, the benevolence and justice appear; the wisdom has come out, the great forgery appears; the six relationships in the society are not harmonised, filiality and parental affection appear; the states are messy and chaotic, the loyal ministers appear.

embrace conspiracy. Chapter 36 starts with the imperative mood which invites different interpretations because it is unclear to whom this chapter is being addressed.[208] It is a ubiquitous instance of the imperative mood in the *Laozi*. For example, in addition to chapter 36, chapter 3, 19 etc. contain the imperative mood, like "fulfil their belly, yet empty their belly" in chapter 3 and "renounce our sageness and discard our wisdom, it would be better for the people a hundredfold" in chapter 19. The text implies things and therefore it is open to interpretation by commentators and translators and the approach of each commentator and translator can impact subsequent interpretations. As aforementioned, I think that the subject in chapter 36 should be implied as the moral agent who undertakes the cultivation of the *Laozi* to foster a sage-like moral agent. The reason why this chapter presents the imperative mood is that the *Laozi* attempts to provide a generic principle for anyone who reads the text, which shows that the achievements, such as closure *xi*, weakness *ruo*, banishment *fei*, and coup *duo*, depend on the conditions, such as openness *zhang*, strengthening *qiang*, prosperousness *xing*, and bestow *yu*.

However, the analysis of the semantic meaning hints at a contradiction that on the one hand, desires are not preferable for the moral agent, but on the other hand the *Laozi* teaches them to achieve their desires. Actually, desires are not preferable for the attainment of the *dao*, because in order to reach the state of the *dao*, the moral agent needs to abolish desires. However, in real human society it is impossible for the moral agent to abandon their natural bodily desires, and for rulers, the completion of deeds requires setting goals, which to a certain degree arouses desires. The *Laozi* recognises this situation for rulers and provides methods to resolve it. Even though rulers cannot be sages

[208] Chapter 36 discussing desires and the moral agent, the *Laozi* says 將欲歙之，必固張之;將欲弱之，必固強之;將欲廢之，必固興之;將欲奪之，必固與之。 是謂微明。柔弱勝剛強。 When one is about to take an inspiration, he is sure to make a (previous) expiration; when he is going to weaken another, he will first strengthen him; when he is going to overthrow another, he will first have raised him up; when he is going to despoil another, he will first have made gifts to him: - this is called 'Hiding the light (of his procedure).'

who completely abandon desires and act in accordance with the *dao*, they can aspire to do what the sage would do in similar situations despite their inability of being in the state of the *dao.* The sage is aware of the regularity of the movement of the *dao*,[209] from one side moving towards the opposite, thus the sage would do the opposite in order to achieve what is required. That is why the *Laozi* teaches the moral agent that in order to achieve one thing, it would be better to do the opposite, as it shows in the text as "if (one) desires … then she must … 将欲 *jiangyu*…必固 *bigu*…".

In addition to the depiction of the distinct images of the ideal and real human society in terms of concepts, the *Laozi* implements the *via negativa* method to describe the *dao* and related concepts in order to reveal an image of real human society. That is to say, by using *via negativa*,[210] the *Laozi* displays that what is generally believed to be good and beneficial for the people in real human society is not what the *Laozi* would consider good, but rather it is the opposite of what the *dao* would do and advocate. In real human society, physical strength of the individual and collective strength at society level are more valuable than weakness, riches are better than poverty, political engagement is better than farming in the field. All of these preferable traits in real human society involve artificial interference which is radically against the *dao*. In chapter 53, the *Laozi* depicts a scene of the conventional idea of the good life, which is having good food, putting on nice clothes and being wealthy; however, this does *not* belong with the *dao.* The court is clean, but the ruled have given up farming in the field. As it states in this chapter, "only the implement (the artificial interference)" is not preferable. The ruled would hold

[209] Chapter 40 反者道之动。moving to the opposites is the movement of the *dao*.

[210] Charles Fu argues that *via negativa* cannot explicitly reveal what the *dao* is. (Fu, Charles Wei-hsun (1973). Lao Tzu's conception of Tao. *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy* 16 (1-4):367 – 394, p 369.) However, I do not argue here that the method of *via negativa* would reveal what the *dao* is, but rather suggest that *via negativa* is the method the *Laozi* implements and by using it, the *Laozi* demonstrates that the situations and the way of the outcome of humans cannot and will not arrive at the ideal.

the thought that they need to leave the field unplanted and that political engagement is the short cut to having a better life.[211]

For the present, I have elucidated the three-fold *dao* in the *Laozi* as the ideal, the ideal-like and in human reality. There are three reasons for my articulation of three-fold *dao;* the first is to parallel with the soul, the cosmic soul and the embodied human soul in Plato, the second is to examine the reason why there is a contradiction in the treatment of knowledge in Plato and the *Laozi,* which I show to be because of the differences of the traits of the *dao* and the cosmic soul, and the third is to show that there is the emulation of the *dao* in human society from the *dao* at the ideal level. Now, I shall move on to the articulation of the soul, the cosmic soul and the embodied human soul in Plato.

2.3 The Cosmic Soul and the Embodied Human Soul

In order to parallel Plato's idea with the *Laozi's* accurately, I will in this section elaborate the notion of the cosmic soul and the embodied human soul. Based on the discussion of the relationships between the Demiurge, the cosmic soul, and the embodied human soul, I will pin down David Sedley's notion of "godlike" and support my argument that the cosmic soul that should be the "god" to emulate rather than the cosmos.[212]

It is depicted in the *Timaeus* that humans will become godlike by contemplating the circular movements of the heavens to gain an understanding of mathematics and in order for the rational soul to function intellectually (*Timaeus* 88e-89b, 90a-c). The rational soul is said to contain the immortal and

[211] Chapter 53 使我介(然)有知，行於大道，唯施是畏。大道甚夷，而民好徑。朝甚除，田甚蕪，倉甚虛;服文 綵，帶利劍，厭飲食，財貨有餘;是謂盜夸。非道也哉! To make me have the least awareness, walking on the great *dao*, it is only implementation that makes (me) fear. The great *dao* is so safe and foreign, but the people prefer short cuts. The courts are so clean, the field is so overgrown with weeds, the storehouse is so empty; the clothes are embroidered and colourful, are wearing the sharp swords, are hosting the banquette, the goods and wealth are sufficient; this is called the great robbery. This is *not* the *dao*!

[212] Sedley, D. (2017). Becoming Godlike. In C. Bobonich (Ed.), The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Ethics (Cambridge Companions to Philosophy, pp. 319-337). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 319-25.

godlike elements and is placed in the sphere – the head – that resembles the shape of the divine bodies (*Timaeus* 44d-45a). As Sedley notes, "to become godlike" as the teleology of human beings in the *Timaeus*, does not mean to become physically godlike and possess omnipotent power, but rather it means to have the attributes of the god, such as immortality, happiness, goodness, wisdom and self-sufficiency.[213] Sedley's view that human beings should emulate the cosmos in order to become godlike implies three things: first, for humans, the cosmos is the higher authority; second, that emulating the cosmos will make human beings morally good; and third, to become godlike is the ultimate moral goal for human beings.[214] By equating gods to the cosmos (world),[215] and other heavenly divine bodies including the sun, earth, and other spheres,[216] Sedley provokes discussions of what exactly 'gods' refers to, and further what is it meant by 'godlike'? In the *Timaeus*, there are many entities referred to as god, including the Demiurge, the cosmic god and traditional gods. It is therefore necessary to identify exactly which god is the one that humans should emulate and be assimilated to, since "to become godlike" is the teleology of humans in Plato. Indeed, this discussion requires a prerequisite of resolving the relationship between the Demiurge and the cosmic soul. Some scholars, such as Carone, argue that the Demiurge is identical to the cosmic soul, whereas others, such as Broadie, argue that the Demiurge is separate from the cosmic soul.[217] If the Demiurge and the cosmic soul are the same, to become godlike is, as Sedley argues, the relatively straightforward task of humans pursuing intellectual fulfilment by means of the cultivation of their rational soul. However, if they are not the same entities it is

[213] Ibid, p. 320.
[214] Ibid.
[215] In this chapter, I use the world and cosmos interchangeably so as to refer to the same and one ordered physical system. Another reason is that scholars use either cosmos or world to compose their papers, I thus may use them interchangeable to refer to the same thing.
[216] Sedley, D. (2017)., p. 319.
[217] Carone, G.R., (2005). *Plato's Cosmology and its Ethical Dimensions*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 26-9; Broadie, S. (2011). The separateness of the Demiurge. In *Nature and Divinity in Plato's Timaeus* (pp. 7- 26). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 9.

unclear which god humans should emulate in order to become godlike. I contend that the Demiurge should be separate from the cosmic soul. Therefore, humans become godlike by emulating the cosmic god – the cosmic soul – and in the *Timaeus* becoming godlike is not merely intellectual fulfilment but also has moral significance and demonstrates the process of the assimilation of the rational part of the human soul to the cosmic soul.

First, we shall look at the prerequisite that establishes the relationship between the Demiurge and the cosmic soul. The Demiurge as the creator of the cosmos is an anthropomorphist figure and, possessing the quality of goodness and beauty, seems to exist independently from the cosmos. As *Timaeus* states "if this world of ours is beautiful and its craftsman good, then clearly he looked at the eternal model" (*Timaeus* 29a2-3). According to this depiction, the eternal model and the Demiurge, as the craftsman, are clearly different ontological beings. And the product, the cosmos, is different from the two as well. Considering this, we need to carefully note that before *Timaeus* starts the speech, he addresses gods and goddesses to "approve of all we have to say, and that in consequence we will too" (*Timaeus* c5-d1). However, as Cornford notes, "neither in the *Timaeus* nor anywhere else is it suggested that the Demiurge should be an object of worship, he is not a religious figure."[218] If we take the myth literally, then we are faced with the first issue of what kind of god the Demiurge is if he is not a religious figure? It is certainly difficult to identify any characteristics of the Demiurge as a god in the *Timaeus,* particularly for humans to emulate.

To understand the creation of the cosmos in relation to the Demiurge, it is necessary to look at the passages in the *Timaeus*, which throughout uses and mentions the term *demiourgos* as the creator (*Timaeus* 40c2, 41a7, 69c3). The following passage helps explain, so I quote the text at length here:

[218] Cornford, F.M., (1937). *Plato's cosmology: the Timaeus of Plato*, London: Routledge & K. Paul, p.35.

"As *I see it, then, we must begin by making the following distinction: What is that which always is and has no becoming, and what is that which becomes but never is? The former is grasped by understanding, which involves a reasoned account. It is unchanging. The latter is grasped by opinion, which involves unreasoning sense perception. It comes to be and passes away, but never really is. Now everything that comes to be must of necessity come to be by the agency of some cause, for it is impossible for anything to come to be without a cause. So whenever the craftsman looks at what is always changeless and, using a thing of that kind as his model, reproduces its form and character, then, of necessity, all that he so completes is beautiful. But were he to look at a thing that has come to be and use as his model something that has been begotten, his work will lack beauty…. . Now to find the maker and father of this universe [to pan] is hard enough, and even if I succeeded, to declare him to everyone is impossible. And so we must go back and raise this question about the universe: Which of the two models did the maker use when he fashioned it? Was it the one that does not change and stays the same, or the one that has come to be? Well, if this world of ours is beautiful and its craftsman good, then clearly he looked at the eternal model. But if what it's blasphemous to even say is the case, then he looked at one that has come to be. Now surely it's clear to all that it was the eternal model he looked at, for, of all the things that have come to be, our universe is the most beautiful, and of causes the craftsman is the most excellent. This, then, is how it has come to be: it is a work of craft, modelled after that which is changeless and is grasped by a rational account, that is, by wisdom.*"[219]

As I see it, then, we must begin by making the following distinction: What is that which always is and has no becoming, and what is that which becomes but never is? The former is grasped by understanding, which involves a reasoned account. It is unchanging. The latter is grasped by opinion, which involves unreasoning sense perception. It comes to be and passes away, but

[219] Cooper, J., & Hutchinson, D. (1997). *Complete works*. Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing, p.1234-5.

never really is. Now everything that comes to be must of necessity come to be by the agency of some cause, for it is impossible for anything to come to be without a cause. So whenever the craftsman looks at what is always changeless and, using a thing of that kind as his model, reproduces its form and character, then, of necessity, all that he so completes is beautiful. But were he to look at a thing that has come to be and use as his model something that has been begotten, his work will lack beauty.

Now as to the whole universe or world order [kosmos]—let's just call it by whatever name is most acceptable in a given context—there is a question we need to consider first. This is the sort of question one should begin with in inquiring into any subject. Has it always existed? Was there no origin from which it came to be? Or did it come to be and take its start from some origin? It has come to be. For it is both visible and tangible and it has a body—and all things of that kind are perceptible. And, as we have shown, perceptible things are grasped by opinion, which involves sense perception. As such, they are things that come to be, things that are begotten. Further, we maintain that, necessarily, that which comes to be must come to be by the agency of some cause. Now to find the maker and father of this universe [to pan] is hard enough, and even if I succeeded, to declare him to everyone is impossible. And so we must go back and raise this question about the universe: Which of the two models did the maker use when he fashioned it? Was it the one that does not change and stays the same, or the one that has come to be? Well, if this world of ours is beautiful and its craftsman good, then clearly he looked at the eternal model. But if what it's blasphemous to even say is the case, then he looked at one that has come to be. Now surely it's clear to all that it was the eternal model he looked at, for, of all the things that have come to be, our universe is the most beautiful, and of causes the craftsman is the most excellent. This, then, is how it has come to be: it is a work of craft, modelled after that which is changeless and is grasped by a rational account, that is, by wisdom.

In this passage, the cosmos is an empirical and tangible thing that belongs to the category of something that is becoming. In contrast with the category of an

intelligible being (*Timaeus* 27d5-28a6), the category of becoming can only be perceived by the senses (*Timaeus* 28c5-29a5). Regarding the model that the Demiurge follows, as we have seen in the distinction between "what is that which always is and has no becoming, and what is that which becomes but never is", someone familiar with the *Republic* would recognise that this is the distinction between the forms and the sensible (*Republic* 518c, 534a). We can interpret the passage above in two ways: first, what are *all the things* which always are and have no becoming, and what are those which become but never are? And second, what are *they* which always are and have no becoming, and what are those which become but never are? The distinction between the two interpretations is that the former question can be interpreted using the theory of the form, and the latter one is the question that the passage in the *Timaeus* attempts to answer, since the cosmos is intangible and unchanging (*Timaeus* 28c, 29b). That is because the process of the creation of the cosmos is the start of the discussion on the metaphysical and epistemological doctrines, as "*the former is grasped by understanding, which involves a reasoned account. It is unchanging. The latter is grasped by opinion, which involves unreasoning sense perception. It comes to be and passes away, but never really is*." (*Timaeus* 28a). The distinction between knowledge and opinion is discussed by the difference between understanding and opinion (*Republic* 507d-511e).[220] Intriguingly, Plato uses the term gods to refer to many things, including the Demiurge, heavenly bodies and traditional gods, and thus he argues that this empirical and tangible cosmos is a god, as stated in the *Timaeus* 34a8, "applying this entire train of reasoning to the god that was yet to be, the eternal god made it smooth and even all over, equal from the centre, a whole and complete body itself, but also made up of complete bodies." Because of Plato's variable references to gods it becomes more difficult to identify which god humans should emulate and model as the final moral goal.

[220] Ashbaugh, A. F. (1988): Plato's Theory of Explanation: A Study of the Cosmological Account in the *Timaeus*, New York, pp. 14-5.

Furthermore, it is hard to interpret *Timaeus'* speech in the *Timaeus*, because in the introduction the speech is described as "likely myth τὸν εἰκότα μῦθον" (*Timaeus* 29d). This leads to the question how should I deal with the account of the creation of the cosmos? Should I interpret it in a mythical/literal way or in a philosophical way? Plato is well known for blurring usage of mythos and logos in his writings.[221] I am not going to debate the distinction between Platonic mythos and Platonic logos, but will focus on whether we take the speech on the creation of the cosmos literally or philosophically, which will determine what we believe the Demiurge is and its relationship with the cosmic soul. I believe that there is philosophical significance in this myth, and I hold that the Demiurge should be separate from the cosmic soul. However, this separation does not affect the assertion that becoming godlike is to become akin to the cosmic soul, rather than the Demiurge, because the Demiurge in the *Timaeus* does not really contain explicit characteristics for humans to emulate and is unlike the cosmic god which shares the same oncological properties with the rational soul of humans. The Demiurge merely appears as the anthropomorphic figure whose representatives are variable in the *Timaeus*, for example, the Demiurge is shown as the cause of the cosmos in the beginning of the speech (*Timaeus* 29a8), nonetheless, later on, the father – the Demiurge – is transformed to the Being. (*Timaeus* 50c8-d2)[222]

Discourse on the relationship between the Demiurge and the cosmic soul is ongoing. As aforementioned, Gabriela Carone and Sarah Broadie both treat the Timaeus as' "likely myth" from a philosophical perspective but hold contradictory interpretations on how the cosmos was created leading them to

[221] Morgan, K.A., (2000). *Myth and philosophy from the Presocratics to Plato*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 155-6. Brisson, L. & Naddaf, G., (1998). *Plato the myth maker*, Chicago, [Ill.] ; London: University of Chicago Press. Betegh, Gabor (2008). Tale, theology, and teleology in the phaedo. In Catalin Partenie (ed.), *Plato's Myths*. Cambridge University Press.

[222] It is true that the Demiurge contains the excessive goodness and lack of envy, which seems to share the human characteristic, but in terms of this, the cosmic god also share the same traits with the Demiurge because the Father wants to construct the product like him. (*Timaeus* 29e-30a)

arrive at opposite conclusions of the relationship between the Demiurge and the cosmic soul. Since my perspective is different to both of theirs, it is important to understand our respective viewpoints with regard to the creation of the cosmos. Carone thinks that the Demiurge represents the cosmic soul, whereas Broadie believes that the Demiurge is a separate entity from the cosmic soul. Carone believes the myth should be read in the philosophic way. She argues that the Demiurge is a god who creates the cosmos and has the essential features of a god, i.e. intelligence/rationality and goodness. The cosmic soul functions in the system of Plato's cosmology as a god for humans to emulate and thus, the Demiurge represents the cosmic soul, because, Carone argues, the separation of the Demiurge from the cosmic soul is redundant.[223] She, like Broadie, compares and contrasts the Demiurge with the god in Judeo-Christian tradition, but her focal point is on the role of the god in both philosophical systems. That is to say, the god is the representation of the good from which conduct streams. Their conduct is always good. Treating this as the premise, then the philosophical system must deal with the problem of evil[224]. On the other hand, Broadie[225] focuses on the process of the creation of the cosmos and she identifies three key features of the process of a product i.e. three key factors of "product, cause and materials" which should be separated from one another. Broadie, by contrasting the *Timaeus* and Christianity, argues that Plato is different from the idea of creation *ex nihilo* from Christianity in which the materials that they used are distinct between *Timaeus* and Christianity with regard to the creator and the created world — the cosmos.[226] Materials are pre-existent, the product is the cosmos and the cause is the Demiurge as stated in the *Timaeus*, thus, they are separate from

[223] Carone, G.R., (2005). *Plato's Cosmology and its Ethical Dimensions*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 26-9.

[224] The problem of evil creates the dilemma that if the god is all good and never bad, and creates the world in a good way, how could the evil be generated?

[225] Broadie, S. (2011). The separateness of the Demiurge. In *Nature and Divinity in Plato's Timaeus* (pp. 7- 26). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 9.
[226] Ibid.

each other. It is incontrovertible that there is an implication in the passage *Timaeus* 30-31 that Plato reveals that the Demiurge places the order and intelligence into pre-existing materials rather than creating the cosmos *ex nihilo* (*Timaeus* 30-31). Moreover, even if we follow Broadie's arguments to resolve the differences between Platonic *Timaeus'* cosmological ideas and Christian ones, (notwithstanding that I do not think it is necessary), the key difference should be the model that the creator follows. It seems to me that Timaeus intends to focus on the issue of whether the Demiurge follows the eternal and changeless model or the model that is coming to be, rather than the material. On the other hand, the idea of *ex nihilo* creation postulated by Christianity is that the creator made the world without following any model. I agree with Broadie's argument that the key factors, "product, cause and materials", should be separated from one another; however, should the third factor be classed as materials or model?[227] According to this passage (the *Timaeus* 28a-b), three key factors contributing to the creation of the cosmos should be product, cause and model, with model being the most beautiful that the creator looks at instead of what Broadie suggests "product, cause and materials". Because the key question in the passage the *Timaeus* 28 b-c is: is the creator looking at the best eternal model or the model that is coming to be? [228] The central discussion about the beauty of the cosmos relies on which model the god copies instead of which materials the god uses. Having analysed Gabriela Carone's and Sarah Broadie's views of the relation between the Demiurge and the cosmic god, it shows that Carone believes that it is redundant to distinguish between the Demiurge and the cosmic god, thus the Demiurge underlines the presence of teleology which pervades the cosmos, whereas Broadie argues that the separation of the Demiurge has philosophical significance.

[227] Ibid.

[228] Johansen in his book also mentions this point. Johansen, T. (2004). The status of Timaeus' account. In Plato's Natural Philosophy: A Study of the Timaeus-Critias (pp. 48-68). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 48.

According to the myth, the Demiurge has two capabilities; to understand the paradigm (Form) of the cosmos; and to create a sensible and tangible cosmos in accordance with the paradigm (*Timaeus* 29a-31b1). The myth further says that the gods created by the Demiurge will generate the mortal parts of the soul. From this standpoint, we can see that terms like god (*theos*), gods (*theoi*), and the divine (*theion*) are used interchangeably in the *Timaeus* after the lesser gods have been created, drawing attention to Plato's notions of gods being blurry.[229] The cosmos, according to Plato, belongs to the realm of becoming, "it has come to be. For it is both visible and tangible and it has a body – and all things of that kind are perceptible. And, as we have shown, perceptible things are grasped by opinion, which involves sense perception" (*Timaeus* 28b8-c1). The meaning of 'become' is ambiguous and confusing; on the one hand, it can mean that the cosmos has come into existence at some point and continues to exist from that point forward; on the other hand, it means that the cosmos exists and is in a process of change. The former meaning of 'become' indicates that the cause – the father or the maker (*Timaeus* 29a9) – gives birth to the cosmos out of his materials: the cosmos comes into being after his creation. The latter meaning of 'become' indicates that the cause perpetually sustains the evolution of the cosmos.[230] In addition, according to the passage in 29a8 the Demiurge is the cause of the cosmos. What kind of cause is the Demiurge to be? First, the Demiurge as a creator is like a craftsman in the *Republic* X who makes a bed out of a Form that is not created by anyone; thus, the Demiurge is like the efficient cause in Aristotle. Second, the Demiurge as a cause shall keep the cosmos continuously changing. If we assume that the aim of creating the cosmos was to reach an ideal goal, then it is fair to assume that the Demiurge must also oversee the evolution of the cosmos since the ideal goal functions as a force to keep the cosmos changing. If so, it contradicts the passage 30b6-c2 in the way the force to keep the

[229] This point has been pointed and discussed by Carone (2005, 31), Cornford (1937, 280) etc.

[230] Cornford, 1937, pp. 24-5.

cosmos changing is derived from the soul, as it notes “He wanted to produce a piece of work that would be as excellent and supreme as its nature would allow. This, then, in keeping with our likely account, is how we must say divine providence brought our world into being as a truly living thing, endowed with soul and intelligence” (*Timaeus* 30b6-c2). Thus, the Demiurge should be a cause like the craftsman in the Republic X which indicates that the Demiurge as a cause should be separate from the cosmos including the cosmic soul.

However, as I stated above, my perspective differs from those of both Broadie and Carone. In the following section I will defend my assertion that becoming godlike as the final moral end for humans is not to become like the Demiurge, but rather it is to become like the cosmic soul or the cosmic god. As we can see in the *Timaeus*, the cosmic soul shares the same materials, ratios and the cause with the human rational soul, and demonstrates the mathematical science as the timeless, changeless and invariable item for humans to learn and emulate. Later on, in the depiction of the receptacle, these three factors change to Being, Becoming and Space, the father is changed from the cause to the Being (*Timaeus* 50d), indicating that the Demiurge is separate from the cosmos and the cosmic soul. On the other hand, the identity of the Demiurge as an anthropomorphic figure is vague in the myth. This shows that the Demiurge is not the one for human beings to emulate to become godlike. It hereafter moves the discussion to what procedure is necessary for human beings to become like the cosmic god – the cosmic soul as the teleology of human beings? This will be the central question I will answer in the next section.

2.4 The Cosmic God and Its Features for Humans to Emulate

As I have argued in the last section, becoming godlike is to become like the cosmic god. However, since the terms god, gods and divine bodies are used multifariously in the *Timaeus*, it is necessary to confirm that the cosmic soul is the referent that Plato intends to point to as the final moral end for humans to emulate. I contend that humans becoming godlike is not merely about

intellectual fulfilment but also has moral significance, which consists of the traits of the final moral end of human beings in Plato.[231] My comparative analysis will show that the intellectual fulfillment in Plato's teleology of humans is contrary to the *Laozi's*, which signifies a fundamentally different treatment of knowledge in each of their philosophies. Although the *Timaeus* is a dialogue devoted to physics, it indicates that human beings' happiness comes from a physical perspective. Human beings who harmonize the rational human soul with the other parts of the soul can share the feature of immortality with the cosmic god by means of being devoted to learning and the attainment of true wisdom (*Timaeus* 90 b1-c5). The passage is important for the discussion:

"*If a man has seriously devoted himself to the love of learning and to true wisdom, if he has exercised these aspects of himself above all, then there is absolutely no way that his thoughts can fail to achieve this: constantly caring for his divine apart as he does keeping well-ordered the guiding spirit that lives within him, he must indeed be supremely happy*." (*Timaeus* 90 b1-c5)

We can find that the terms *eudaimonia* (the fulfilment of life) and *daimon* (god) are presented in the passage, which indicates that Plato uses the lexical tool to show that *eudaimonia* contains the etymological root – *daimon,* as a means of showing that the fulfilment of life (*eudaimonia*) of human beings is based on the rational human soul dwelling in the rounded-head becoming well ordered. The *Timaeus* notes that "and because he always takes care of that which is divine and has the *daimon* that lives with him well ordered, he will be supremely happy (*eudemonia*)" (*Timaeus* 90c5). On the one hand, for the purpose of corresponding between the rational human soul and the cosmic soul for the sake of implanting the cosmological good in humans, Plato notes the rational human soul and the cosmic soul share the same substance and motions. On the other hand, the rational human soul is placed within the human body which troubles it to get into the right order. As Plato notes, this is not as simple as spinning thread because the human body disturbs the revolution of the rational

[231] Russell 2004, Armstrong 2004 Mahoney 2008 Silverman 2010a.

human soul, unlike the movement of the divine heavenly bodies which have nothing to disturb them. From the moment of birth, the human soul is influenced by six motions (up-down, backwards-forwards, left-right) which are associated with sensation (the *Timaeus* 43a-d). But why should caring for the rational human soul and getting it well-ordered finally lead humans to supreme happiness (*eudaimonia)*? What exactly does 'caring for' and 'getting well-ordered' mean in relation to the rational human soul? What should humans do to achieve a well-ordered rational human soul? I argue that order is the good that the embodied human soul should embrace in accordance with the order of the cosmic soul, which indicates order prevails over disorder for humans both physically and psychologically and further indicates that the assimilation of human beings to the cosmic god is achieved by ordering the rational human soul through learning.

Plato asserts that order indicates the good by saying that something that has order is better than something without order (*Timaeus* 30a1-2). But what consists of the good of order and how can humans adopt the order of the cosmic soul for themselves? I follow Mason's argument that order in the cosmos consists of "periodicity and predictability" that is manifested by means of the motions of the divine heavenly bodies for humans to learn, reason and emulate.[232] For Plato, order prevails over disorder, because order is good, and disorder is bad. Not only is this expressed explicitly in the beginning of the Demiurge who creates the cosmos (*Timaeus* 30a1-6) but is also indicated by the demonstration from the beginning of human life to the rational part of the human soul becoming ordered (*Timaeus* 43a-b). The Demiurge "wanted

[232] Mason, A. (2006). Plato on Necessity and Chaos. *Philosophical Studies, 127*(2), 283-298, p.290. This argument is proposed by Andrew Mason. He argues in the paper that the relation among the necessity, the order and the chaos. He thinks that Plato correlates the necessity with the disorder/ the chaos which should not be so alien to us at the first sight, because the necessity normally is associated with the order instead of the disorder. However, my focus is different from him. My focal point is just on what the order is to Plato and how the order of the cosmos is demonstrated for humans to emulate.

everything to be good, and nothing to be bad as far as that was possible" (*Timaeus* 30a 1-2) Thus, in the process of the creation of the cosmos the Demiurge takes over all of the visible materials of the cosmos, which is pre-existent but in discordant and disorderly motion, and brings them in order, because the Demiurge believes that order is in every way better than disorder (*Timaeus* 30a4-6).

The totality of the human soul includes the divine part of the human soul that is bonded with the non-rational part of the soul and is embodied into the human body. The rational human soul gets affected because this divine part of the soul is joined with the human body by "many rivets" unlike the cosmos and the cosmic soul which is a dynamic construction produced altogether (*Timaeus* 34b8-c2). According to Timaeus, every soul in the very beginning is created in the same manner and quality (*Timaeus* 41e), and the rational human soul is made with the same ratios of the materials yet is less pure at the same time (*Timaeus* 41d4-7). This indicates that the rational (immortal) soul of the human being is supposed to work in the same manner as the cosmic soul including the motions and the circles of the Same and the Difference (35b-37c). However, once the rational human soul is embedded into the human body, then the rational soul does not consist of just a single motion, but rather of seven motions. The rational human soul cannot function in the very beginning of human life, because, unlike the cosmic soul that only contains two kinds of motions and so will not be affected by the other six kinds of motions (back and forth, right and left, up and down) (*Timaeus* 39a4-b2 ff. 43 b6-8). The rational human soul is affected by all six kinds of motions at the same time from different angles. The motion of the circle of the Same and the Difference that is the same with the motions of the cosmic soul (*Timaeus* 39a4-b2) are affected, one stops and the other is deflected. This makes the rational human soul, albeit sharing the same make-up as the cosmic soul, not operate properly in the human body in the beginning. The human body nourishes the rational soul to realign it back to its original motions (*Timaeus* 44b2-5). "if such a person also gets proper nurture to supplement his education, he'll turn out perfectly

whole and healthy, and will have escaped the most grievous of illnesses" (*Timaeus* 44b8-c2).

The Demiurge implants order into the cosmos during the creation of the cosmic body and the cosmic soul. The cosmic body is the physical cosmos that we see around us, which includes the sun, the earth, the moon, other planets and the wider solar system. The Demiurge uses up the four material elements of water, fire, earth and air that he has from the pre-cosmos stage to create a cosmic body that is as good as it can be to prevent illness or disaster. Plato indicates that the cosmic body is made in the shape of well-ordered geometric constructions that can be understood by mathematical logic (*Timaeus* 31b4-33d1). In the process of the creation of the cosmic soul, the interaction between the motion of the *same* and the motion of the *different* are correlated with the process of cognition (*Timaeus* 37b). The Demiurge mixes the *same*, the *different* and the *being* according to certain ratios, and then splits the mixture down the middle creating two circles, one of which he positions vertically and the other horizontally, rather like the equator and any line of latitude. The two circles represent the motion of the same and the motion of the different, which relate to the recognition and cognition of objects or concepts. If the thing is sensible, then the circle of the different will move, whereas if there arises judgment and belief that are concerned with the rational, then the circle of the same will move.[233] The circles of the Same and the Different could recognise, reason and proclaim which accounts are attributed as soon as it meets the objects (*Timaeus* 37c-d). On the one hand, it reveals that the process of the creation of the cosmic soul is again in the shape of well-ordered mathematical calculations of the mixture among Being, the Same and the Difference; on the other hand, it pins down how intelligence

[233] Cornford, F.M., (1937). *Plato's cosmology: the Timaeus of Plato*, London: Routledge & K. Paul. Cornford argues that the motions of the circles of the same and the different are in the relation with the philosophic discourses that is with regard to the affirmative and negative statements concerning Forms. "The false judgement is described as mistaking one Form to another." (p.97)

works in accordance with the operation of the particular parts of the cosmic soul relating to the procedure of thinking and cognition. Thus, for the totality of the cosmos including the cosmic soul and the cosmic body is good because, as *Timaeus* stated, it is in order, and the order is organised on the mathematical bases for the human being to learn, understand and emulate.

In *Timaeus* 43a-c, 44a-c, 47b-c Plato reveals a close connection between the motions of the cosmic soul and the rational part of the human soul with respect to the relation of moving as well as being situated in different sensible bodies. During infancy, the rational human soul, although sharing the same substance with the cosmic soul, "is bounded within a mortal body, it at first lacks intelligence" (*Timaeus* 44a). Thus, "whenever they encounter something outside of them characterizable as same or different, they will speak of it as 'the same as' something or as 'different from' something else when the truth is just the opposite, so proving themselves to be misled and unintelligent" (*Timaeus* 44a-b). In order to make the rational part of the human soul get back in order, during infancy the body needs to be nourished so as to sustain the function of the combination of the mortal body and the rational soul, but also the infant needs to be exposed to the revolution of the motions of the orbit for learning and "conforming to the configuration each of the circles takes in its natural course" (*Timaeus* 44b). The aim of this process is for the moral agent to identify the motions of the same and the different by observing the revolutions of the stars and learning mathematics so as to make the rational soul assimilate with the cosmic gods.

In this section, I have demonstrated that, for Plato, the final moral end for humans is to become godlike. This can only be achieved by emulating the motion of the cosmic gods, which requires the rational human soul to move in an ordered way. Watching the revolutions of the heavenly gods and by learning and understanding mathematics is the means by which humans can emulate the motions of the cosmic gods and become godlike.

2.5 Comparison of the Final Moral Ends in the *Laozi* and Plato

In this chapter, if we try to collate similarities between the *Laozi* and Plato in terms of the final moral ends, a central point to be emphasised is what are the final moral ends in the *Laozi* and Plato. A useful formula to compare the *Laozi* and Plato is what I coin the "as if method". This formula in the *Laozi* can be interpreted as "as if 若 *ruo*"; whereas in Plato it can be interpreted as "*eikos muthos* likely accounts". This "as if method" in fact consists in bridging the metaphysical foundation and the physical human reality. Relying on the "as if method", allows us to interpret the final moral ends as the living in accordance with the *dao* in the *Laozi* and to become godlike as much as possible in Plato. But what insightful points will we realise after the comparison of the final moral ends between the *Laozi* and Plato?

Before answering the question above, it requires some accounts for the interpretation of the comparison method – "as if method" – in the *Laozi* and Plato. As aforementioned, I suggest that the "as if method" bridges the truth of cosmic soul and human soul depicted by Timaeus in Plato and the *dao* at the ideal level and the *dao* in the human reality in the *Laozi*. The *Laozi* employs "as if 若 *ruo*" to depict either a status or an image that is so close to the *dao* at the ideal level, as I have mentioned earlier in this chapter. This "as if method" can be confirmed by the term "as if 若 *ruo*"[234] as well as the similar sense that either depicts a comparable image[235] or forces to offer a name to the *dao*[236]; whereas Plato expresses it in the *Timaeus* 28c-29d to emphasise that it is difficult to find out the creator of the cosmos, and even if we had discovered the creator, it is impossible to pass the knowledge of it to others. The best option for us is to offer a "*eikos muthos* likely story". The philosophical intention in both the *Laozi* and Plato appealing for the capability to not acquire

[234] Chapter 8 上善若水。 "the highest good is like water."

[235] Chapter 15

[236] Chapter 25

knowledge of the two metaphysical foundations – the *dao* in the *Laozi* and the cosmic soul in Plato – underline the best approach to get closer to the metaphysical foundations. The best that can be obtained is that for the *Laozi*, the moral agent acts in the way water interacts with the external world, and for Plato, the moral agent investigates the truth not beyond the likely story.

In paralleling the final moral ends in the Laozi with Plato, in addition to what we have found that the final moral end is to live in accordance with the *dao* in the *Laozi* and is to become godlike as much as possible in Plato, we can find that this natural teleology for human beings guides them to pursue exemplary lives. For both, the images of the exemplar life presented in the texts can be achieved by the emulation to the higher authorities, the *dao* in the *Laozi* and the cosmic soul in Plato. The higher authorities in the *Laozi* and Plato respectively possess the highest good including the principles of conduct and orders for the moral agent to learn. We found that through the "as if method" the *Laozi* depicts an image of people who has possessed the *dao* and are good at practicing it, as well as conceptualising the process for the moral agent to become the exemplary image as the process of emulation of the higher authority; whereas Plato depicts it in a different way to express the emulation of the higher authority. The rational soul sharing the same materials and ratios with the cosmic soul is placed in a different situation, i.e. the human body, which makes the rational soul, on the one hand, possess the capability of the attainment of knowledge by observing and learning mathematics, and on the other hand, is consistently affected by the human body. The order in Plato is brought by Demiurge in the pre-existing materials that are in the discordance and unordered motions – brought from disorder to order (*Timaeus* 30a 1-2); whereas the order, although the Laozi does not explicitly reveal it and is in very different sense from Plato's, can be interpreted as that which is embedded in the *dao*. Not only is it because the *dao* can be interpreted as a set of principles

to regulate and operate the world[237], but also the *dao* operates itself as so-itself (*ziran* 自然).[238]

In Plato, disorder precedes order in the level of the cosmos, and the same occurs in the level of the rational human soul. When the infant is newly born, regardless of the same substance shared between the cosmic soul and the rational human soul, the rational human soul is in a state of disorder thanks to the affections from various motions and from different directions (*Timaeus* 43 b6-8). In the state of disorder, the rational human soul is incapable of reasoning. Order which is necessary for the rational soul to get back to its right revolutions can be brought back to the rational human soul by learning and observing the revolutions of the cosmic gods (*Timaeus* 88e-89b, 90a-c). Learning and observation of the divine bodies are for the purpose of getting the rational soul into order, which is akin to bringing the cosmos into order from disorder. This is the procedure to become as godlike as possible.

In the *Laozi* the notion of order can be interpreted similarly. It has roughly the same sense with what Plato coins "order or the order of soul", which denotes periodicity and predictability. We can find that when the topic is on the regulation of the states, the *Laozi* often uses the term *zhi* 治 that can be translated as regulated or put the state in order. For example, in Chapter 60, the *Laozi* depicts that regulating a big state is like cooking a pot of small fish.[239] The conduct of 'regulate' implies the sense of putting a state in good order, as Ames and Hall note that "bringing proper order to a great nation requires patience and a lightness of touch on the part of those who would assume this responsibility."[240] Despite the *Laozi* and Plato having a similar understanding of the notion of order and functions of the final moral ends for moral agents, the issue of moral motivation and human conduct, despite being related to the

[237] Chapter 51 道生之，德畜之，物形之，勢成之。

[238] Chapter 25 道法自然。

[239] Chapter 60 治大國如烹小鮮。

[240] Ames and Hall, 2003, p. 171.

metaphysical foundation in both, is treated in radically different ways. I will explain it in detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 3 The Moral Motivations in Plato and the *Laozi*

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I elucidated and examined the different approaches of the *Laozi* and Plato in pursuing the final moral goals associated with the virtues of the *dao* and the cosmic soul. In this chapter I will further the argument that the different approaches are associated with the treatment of knowledge, with Plato advocating a pursuit of knowledge and the *Laozi* advocating the opposite as the means to reach philosopher-king and sage-like status respectively. Despite the pursuit of knowledge being key in Plato and the absence of knowledge being key in the *Laozi*, both advocate the absence of desire as being key to reaching truly moral status. In Plato, the function of rationality is central to the moral agent becoming truly moral, whereas the absence of rationality and desires is central to the moral agent becoming truly moral in the *Laozi*. In the following sections, I will present different kinds of desires in the *Laozi* and Plato to illustrate the different approaches of each; for Plato it is educating the moral agent to be rational, whereas for the *Laozi* it is the cultivation of the moral agent to minimise desires to only those that fulfil basic needs.

As mentioned in chapter 2, the final moral goal provides a guideline for the masses to identify the life they would need to live to become a moral agent. The implication in both Plato and the *Laozi* is that the standard to judge if actions performed by the moral agent are correct depend on whether the agent is moral or not. This implication is manifested by the moral exemplar figures – the sage and the philosopher – in the *Laozi* and Plato respectively.[241] However, it can be seen that desires differ and are not identical in the *Laozi* and Plato. Given that desires in both engender moral motivation yet desires

[241] For the details of the arguments, to see chapter 1 and chapter 2 of my thesis.

are different, can all motivations be recognised as identical, and can actions conducted in accordance with the corresponding motivation be considered as identical? If not, what triggers the difference? To answer these questions, it is necessary to understand the different kinds of desires and also the corresponding motivations in the *Laozi* and Plato, which I will undertake separately.

3.2 The Desires in the *Laozi*

In considering the notion of desire in the *Laozi*, two kinds of syntactical forms are employed for the character "欲 *yu*" – noun and verb.[242] The lexical differentiation of *yu* does not affect the conceptualisation of human desires in the *Laozi*, because *yu* being used as a noun or a verb expresses the feeling that the moral agent should do something or act upon their will to make something happen. For example, in chapter 36, *yu* is used as a verb - 將欲歙之，必固張之, *When one is about to take an inspiration, he is sure to make a (previous) expiration* - and in chapter 3, *yu* is used as a noun - 常使民無知無欲 *constantly (tries to) keep them without knowledge and without desire.*[243] As we can see, when *yu* is used as a verb in chapter 36, it denotes a kind of willingness for the moral agent, and a prescribed act upon their intentions; whereas when *yu* is used as a noun in chapter 3 it denotes an absence of the willingness to obtain or act upon anything by the moral agent. Thus, we can see that the syntactical forms of *yu* in the *Laozi* does not affect the conceptualisation of the notion of human desires.

Conventional thinking, exemplified by Hans-Georg Moeller's interpretation of desires in the *Laozi*, is that is one of the representative philosophies in the promotion of minimising human desires that impede humans achieving or developing their potential to accomplish the same as heaven and earth, such

[242] This character appears in 15 chapters, chapters1, 3, 15, 19, 29, 34, 36, 37, 39, 46, 57, 61, 64, 66, 77.

[243] Tse, L. & Legge, James, 2009. *Tao Te Ching Or the Tao and its Characteristics*, S.l.: The Floating Press, p. 12, pp.65-66.

as the attainment of the *dao*, and described by Moeller as the "human problem" — "i.e. the problem of achieving the same degree of natural functionality among humans as within 'heaven and earth'". Moeller further states that the best status for the moral agent would be to have no desire, which drives the moral agent to be internally and externally peaceful.[244] The representation of the conventional interpretation of human desire shows that human desire is an impediment at personal and societal levels. That is to say, on the one hand, human desire is an impediment to moral agents possessing the *dao* and living in accordance with it for the sake of becoming internally and externally peaceful; and on the other hand, human desire at societal level generates the chaos of society such as an outbreak of war as a result of never satisfying an ever growing array of desires. This suggests that human desire is a negative emotional possession for the moral agent in the *Laozi*.[245]

However, human desire is not entirely portrayed in a negative light in the *Laozi*, but the positive aspect is usually neglected by scholars. I believe human desire is portrayed positively in the *Laozi* and I will use two points to illustrate that conventional thought has not yet shown the panorama of the notion of human desire in the *Laozi*. First, arguing that human desires are entirely negative emotional possessions is contrary to the philosophy of the *Laozi,* which shows a dynamic back and forth swing from positive to negative of the opposing pairs. As chapter 2 notes: "*it is that existence and non-existence give birth of one to (the idea of) the other; that difficulty and ease produce the one to (the idea of) the other; that length and shortness fashion out one from the figure of the other; that (the ideas of) height and lowness arise from the contrast of the one with the other; that the musical notes and tones become harmonious through the relation of one with another; and that being before and after give the idea of*

[244] Moeller, H.-G., (2006). *The Philosophy of the Daodejing.*, New York: Columbia University Press, p.87； Virág, C. (2017), p.76.

[245] A similar argument can be found in Curie Virág's book, the emotions in early Chinese Philosophy. She also avers that "One of the salient features of this text (the *Laozi*) is its negative account of emotions and desires as fundamentally contrary to the realisation of the perfected life—a life in accordance with the natural process of the cosmos." (p. 77)

one following another."[246]. As aforementioned in the first chapter of my thesis, opposing pairs of concepts of weak and strong appear in the *Laozi*, albeit applauding the idea of staying with the weakness (守弱 *shouruo)*, the radical reason of the juxtaposition of the opposing pairs is that the *Laozi* believes they are in flux and always changing from one side to the other. As chapter 30 notes, "物壯則老，是謂不道，不道早已 - *When things have attained their strong maturity they become old. This may be said to be not in accordance with the Dao: and what is not in accordance with it soon comes to an end."* This passage indicates that the state of being strong is the start of getting old, which implies that it is propitious to stay with the weakness, because staying with the weakness prevents the object from getting strong and in turn becoming old. That shows indeed that on the one hand, we find that the *Laozi* is not in agreement with conventional social values, such as the possession of strength (壯 *Zhuang)*; and on the other hand, we can say that the *Laozi* wishes to express that every aspect has its own advantage, meaning human desires are not merely negative.

Second, *youyu* and *wuyu* are both expressed in chapter 1, as it notes, "故常無欲，以觀其妙；常有欲，以觀其徼。*Always without desire we must be found, if its deep mystery we would sound; But if desire always within us be, Its outer fringe is all that we shall see*." In this chapter, 'consistent *chang* 常' denotes that *youyu* and *wuyu* are states *consistently* possessed by the moral agent.. The *Laozi* asserts that human desires consistently exist in moral agents as conditions affecting them. Desires as used in chapter 1 are taken as two kinds of condition for moral agents to contemplate (觀 *guan*) the *dao*; having desires or having no desires. For moral agents, these two moral psychological conditions determine their perception of the *dao* and how they live and act in human society. Having no desire is the condition for moral agents to be able to contemplate the aspect of the *dao* at the ideal level as I explained in chapter 2*,* whereas having desires is the condition for moral agents to be able to

[246] Chapter 2 有無相生，難易相成，長短相較，高下相傾，音聲相和，前後相隨。

contemplate the aspect of the *dao* at the ideal-like level. Yet, conventional thinking dismisses the condition for moral agents who can consistently have desires in human society and how they deal with those desires. Thus, the panorama of the notion of desire in the *Laozi* is *not* demonstrated. From this perspective, we can tell that desires as the generator of moral motivation have a close relation to the *dao* in the *Laozi*, but their relationship to moral motivation and the mechanism of moral agents' conducts are unclear.

To enable comparison between the *Laozi* and Plato, in terms of moral motivation, it is necessary to first understand the notion of desire in the *Laozi*. Since the concept of desire has a close relation to the *dao,* as I have mentioned above, linking the notion of desire with the *dao* at different levels demonstrated in chapter 2 of my thesis will facilitate the further comparison. In the next section, I suggest that human desires can be categorised into 'emotional desires' and 'bodily desires'. We can find that emotional desires pertain to the heart (心 *xin*), whereas bodily desires pertain to the body (身 *shen*). Furthermore, I argue that three situations of moral agents having human desires are depicted in the *Laozi*, i.e. having no desire (無欲 *wuyu*) in chapters 1, 3, 34, 37, 57, having few desires (寡欲 *guayu*) in chapter 19, and having desires (有欲 *youyu*) in chapter 1. These three conditions indicate the status of possession of desires including emotional and bodily desires for moral agents, which generates distinct motivations for the moral agent to act. Finally, I suggest that we can find the prescriptive approaches in the *Laozi* to achieving the status of *wuyu* or *guayu* by means of being aware of fulfilment (知足 *zhizu*).

3.3 Bodily Desires and Emotional Desires

In this section, I suggest that the *Laozi* indicates the distinction of desires (欲 *yu)* in the *Laozi* as bodily desires and emotional desires for the purpose of arguing that the optimal situation is to have no desires at all, but the best situation for the moral agent in human society is to have close to no desires (寡欲 *guayu)*, which is achieved by minimising emotional desires.

I term desires that are innate to humans as 'bodily desires', and those that are not innate as 'emotional desires'. Bodily desires occur naturally from birth and include hunger and thirst, which are essential to sustain life. Such desires will be present throughout life since the need for food and water is a pre-requisite of life. Emotional desires are those that are not essential to sustain life but add value to life, such as the desire to obtain objects or participate in activities.[247] In the *Laozi* and Plato desires are differentiated according to different criteria, but in each they can be attributed to either bodily desires or emotional desires. At the same time the desires can have multi-layers. A desire to eat can be both a bodily desire and an emotional desire according to circumstance. When a person needs to eat because of hunger the desire is a bodily one. However, when a person wants to eat something simply because it looks appetising it is an emotional desire. In the first case the desire to eat is to sustain life, while in the second case the desire to eat is to enhance life. Emotional desires are not limited to physical desires but also include the pursuit of knowledge and intellectual insight.

With regard to my definition of bodily desires and emotional desires I share some, but not all, of Virág's arguments in terms of the notion of desires in the *Laozi*. She argues that "the optimal form of desires is the human counterpart to the *dao* itself. This desire is the source from which all things in the world arise and move toward fulfilment."[248] This argument is radically different from Moeller's that, apart from agreeing with Virág's statement that human desires in the *Laozi* becomes the institution to reason and motivate the moral agent, human desires are not entirely negative to humans to become "human problems". Conventional thinking of moral philosophy in the *Laozi* is that it

[247] McDaniel, K. and Bradley, B., 2008. "Desires," Mind, 117: 267–302. It is true that in their paper, the main point is to justify the topic of the conditional desire, but they also have a detailed discussion regarding the distinction between desires of objects and state of affairs is well presented in this paper.

[248] Virág, C. (2017). The Emotions in Early Chinese Philosophy. Oxford University Press, p. 77.

encourages or promotes *wuwei*, rather than actions motivated by desires.[249] What is the moral motivation of *wuwei* in the *Laozi*? My hypothesis is that human desire pertaining to the heart (心 *xin*[250]) is in charge of both cognitive and affective activities, which is coined as "emotional desire". As I noted above the desires will motivate the moral agent to act upon them while the *Laozi* also provides the means of how to achieve the action. With an empty (虛 *xu)* heart there are no desires, meaning moral agents would not be motivated by any emotional desire, instead actions would be performed spontaneously according to the situation (actions I describe as *wuwei*). The relation between *xin* and emotional desires in the *Laozi* requires some explanation. Based on the interpretation of *xin,* how moral agents are motivated can be explicitly shown under different conditions of *xin,* including the cognitive condition, the affective condition, which is presented in the *Laozi* as *xin* with desires, and the empty *xin*. I will elucidate this further in the following.

Chapter 3 in the *Laozi* notes that "do not see (the thing) that can be desired, this makes the heart not disturbed"[251], which links sight with desire and desire determines whether *xin* is disturbed or not. If the heart (心 *xin*) in this chapter is implicitly considered to be a physical organ like other sensual organs such

[249] Edward Slingerland, effortless actions, Kwong-loi Shun, Moral psychology in the book of Encyclopedia of Chinese Philosophy, p.477.

[250] Kwong-loi Shun, (2003) *Moral psychology* in Cua, A. (2003). *Encyclopedia of Chinese philosophy*. New York ; London: Routledge, p.469. I am sympathetic to Shun's argument that *xin* 心 heart is in charge of cognitive and affective activities in the early *Daoist* works, I will also argue and prove with the textual analysis that it is applicable to the *Laozi*.

[251] Chapter 3 不貴難得之貨，使民不為盜。不見可欲，使心不亂。是以聖人之治，虛其心，實其腹，弱其志，強其骨。常使民無知無欲。使夫知者不敢為也。為無為，則無不治。*Do not value the goods that is hard to obtain, (this does not) make the (ruled) people become thieves.* D*o not see that (the thing) can be desired, this makes the heart not disturbed. That is the rule of the sage, to empty their hearts, (but) to fulfil their belly, to weaken their aspiration, (but) to strengthen their bones (body). (The sage) consistently makes the (ruled) people no awareness and no desires. To make the people who are aware of do not dare to act. (The sage) acts* non-desire triggered actions*, then nothing cannot be governed.*

as the eyes or mouth, then 'disturb 亂 *luan*' would be in the sense of the irregular beating of *xin*, which would affect the way the agents feel. However, this would be irrelevant to empty *xin*[252] of moral agents stated later in the same chapter. The *xin* is disturbed by desires that are aroused from what moral agents see, and this shows that *xin* is pivotal in dealing with affections aroused by sensual organs. Some emotional desires, that disturb the heart, could lead people to perform inappropriate actions, such as the desire for valuable goods leading people to become thieves.[253] Thus, in this chapter, the *Laozi* associates moral agents' *xin* with emotional desires by showing that emotional desire could be aroused by sensual organs of moral agents, which would affects the moral agents' *xin*.

是以聖人之治，虛其心，實其腹，弱其志，強其骨。

That is the rule of the sage, to empty their hearts, (but) to fill their belly, to weaken their aspiration, (but) to strengthen their bones (body).

In this passage, the paired verbs and nouns denote the contrast between body and heart, further implying the contrast between bodily desires and emotional desires. Belly (腹 *fu*) and bone (骨 *gu*) are an example of a pair of words representing the body and contrast with heart (心 *xin*) and intent (志 *zhi*). The juxtaposition of body and heart is indicative of the contrasting way in which the sage ruler treats bodily and emotional desires, where bodily desires should be fulfilled, but emotional desires should be empty. That is to say, the sage ruler, on the one hand, ensures the ruled people's basic needs are satisfied (欲 *yu*), but on the other hand, emotional desires pertain to *xin*, and the *Laozi's* advice

[252] Ibid.

[253] Chapter 3 不貴難得之貨，使民不為盜。I am sympathetic to Curie Virág's argument that the wider sense of the emotion includes human desires. (the emotions in early Chinese philosophy, introduction). Kwong-loi Shun also argues that the emotions in the early Chinese Philosophy contain the desire, Kwong-loi Shun, (2003), p.469.

is to empty desires from their *xin*.[254] This corresponds with the sentence '*do not see (the thing) that can be desired, this makes the heart not disturbed*'[255] in terms of keeping *xin* from being disturbed by avoiding emotional desires. In this sentence two pairs of contrasting verbs, to empty (虛 *xu*) and to fulfil (實 *shi*) and to weaken (弱 *ruo*) and to strengthen (强 *qiang*), juxtapose human's moral psychology and physical body. The juxtapositions emphasise the verbs empty and weaken focusing on the underestimation of human's moral psychology, thus the sage ruler pays more attention to the ruled people's bodies rather than their cognitive aspirations and affective motivation.

As aforementioned in chapter 2, if *wuwei* is the ideal status for the moral agent, then what is the procedure of motivating the moral agent to achieve *wuwei*? I suggest that the action of *wuwei* is performed based on the motivation from an empty heart, that is the heart (心 *xin*) without any desires. Actions derived from desires are artificial actions, which the *Laozi* neither forbids nor promotes; whereas actions performed from an empty heart are *wuwei* since they are not motivated from any desires, but take place in each particular circumstance. Paradoxes of expressions are conveyed in the *Laozi* through the use of a verb with the negation of a noun, in which the verb and the noun are the same character used in different word classes. 無 *wu* and 不 *bu* are used to indicate the negation of a status or an action, such as 無為 *wuwei*, 不欲 *buyu* etc. Placing the verbs to act (為 *wei*) and to desire (欲 *yu*) in front of the same noun characters action (為 *wei*) and desire (欲 *yu*) expresses the actualisation of the negation of the terms. For example, 為無為 *weiwuwei* means act *wuwei*, 欲不欲 *yubuyu* means desire no desires, and 知不知 *zhibuzhi* means to know not-knowing. In chapter 3, "為無為，則無不治 *To make the people who are aware of that they should not dare to act. (The sage) acts wuwei, then nothing cannot*

[254] Slingerland, E. (2015). Trying not to try. Edinburgh: Canongate, p. 88. Slingerland also argues similarly, but he does not draw any attention to the connections among eyes, heart and emotional desires.

[255] Chapter 3 不見可欲，使心不亂。

be governed" wuwei is the ideal means of the ruler of the country to show that everything can be conquered and governed if the sage ruler can act *wuwei*.

Xin functioning as the centre of human cognition generates actions with desire and actions without desire. The *Laozi* refers to this interaction as "*weixue* 爲学 in the process of learning", whereby the moral agent becomes more and more aware of different aspects of the world. The *Laozi* thus claims that in the process of learning, the moral agent increases their awareness of objects on a daily basis.[256] However, the more aware of the world the moral agent becomes, the more desires are generated for the moral agent to pursue. These human desires, which are the side products of learning, agitate the hearts of moral agents, which in turn make them generate actions to interfere with the world. The *Laozi* is not completely against such interference with the world but, notifies the moral agent that contemplating the *dao* with desires will meet boundaries. In chapter 1 the *Laozi* briefly but profoundly points out that the moral agent with human desire contemplates the boundaries of the *dao*, and without human desire contemplates the profundity of the *dao*.[257]

On the other hand, "*weidao* 爲道 in the practice of the *dao*" is the process of banishing desire from the heart of the moral agent. In chapter 48, *weidao* notes a process for the moral agent to move from the status of having desire to the status of having no desire, as had already been depicted in Chapter 1. That is to say, the moral agent does not reach the ideal status in one step. Each day there is an increase in temptations (desires) for the moral agent, but the more they practice the *dao*, the fewer desires thy hold in their heart; which follows my argument in the previous chapter of the ideal status being one of the *dao* having no desires. By practising the dao the moral agent can reach the status of having no desires, leading them to be capable of "*contemplating the*

[256] Roger Ames is making similar arguments as myself. He argues that the Daoists are suspicious of the process of leaning in the way of expanding their knowledge and experience. This way of learning implies that the Daoists need to interact with the environments, but this will frustrate its own intentions. (R. Ames and D. L. Hall, 2003, p. 152)
[257] Chapter 1 常無欲，以觀其妙；常有欲，以觀其徼.

profundity of the dao".[258] Reaching the ideal status of having no desires like the sage and the process of reaching it is what the *Laozi* calls empty *xin*. By reaching this status, with empty *xin*, the moral agent can be *wuwei*. As chapter 64 notes, "*That is why the sage desires the status of having no desires, she does not value the hardly obtained goods.* 是以聖人欲不欲，不貴難得之貨". *Wuwei* motivated by no-desires in accordance with the principle of the *dao* interferes with nothing but rather participates as it should. Thus, *wuwei* for the *Laozi* is the action performed by moral agents who are in the state of having no desires and are able to live and act in accordance with the *dao*.

3.4 Having Desires 有欲 *youyu*, Having Few Desires 寡欲 *guayu*, and Having No Desires 無欲 *wuyu*

Having seen the duality of emotional desires and bodily desire in the *Laozi*, in this section I will start to clarify the distinction among *youyu*, *guayu* and *wuyu*, and further suggest, through analysis of chapter 1, that the procedure of reaching the ideal status *wuyu* can be achieved through the approach of *guayu* and to know fulfilment 知足 *zhizu*.

Chapter 1：*The dao can be spoken, that is not the consistent dao. The name can be named, that is not the consistent name. The Namelessness is the beginning of the heaven and the earth; the Name is the mother of the ten thousand of things. Thus, consistently in the status of having no desires, (the moral agent) could contemplate the profundity of the dao; consistently in the status of having desires, (the moral agent) could contemplate the boundaries of the dao. These two things, coming out altogether but with different names, that is called dark and profundity. More and more profundity, that is the gate of the profundities.*[259] (translated by James Legge)

[258] Chapter 1 以觀其妙

[259] 道可道，非常道。名可名，非常名。無名天地之始；有名萬物之母。故常無欲，以觀其妙；常有欲，以觀其徼。此兩者，同出而異名，同謂之玄。玄之又玄，衆妙之門。

In chapter 1 the *Laozi* highlights the dichotomy of having desires (有欲 *youyu*) or having no desires (無欲 *wuyu)*, which links to moral agents possessing two kinds of motivation and the related contemplation of the different perspectives of the *dao*. That is to say, being situated in one of the two moral psychologies of having desires (有欲 *youyu*) or having no desires (無欲 *wuyu*), moral agents have different perceptions and deliberations of the *dao* at either the ideal level (for moral agents without desires) or the human society level (for moral agents with desires).[260] The contemplation of the different perspectives of the *dao* indicates which *Weltanschauung* moral agents behold, and as I have argued in the previous chapter there are three kinds of *Weltanschauung* demonstrated in the *Laozi*, the ideal, the ideal-like and human reality. What exactly does desire connote? For the *Laozi*, is it possible to have desire in the situation of having no desires?

For centuries the *Laozi* has puzzled readers due to the contradiction that the moral agent should 'always/consistent 常 *chang'* have desires yet have no desires. The commentator Wang Bi 王弼 (226-249 AD) uses this contradictory concept to strengthen his argument in terms of the significance of the Non-being (無 *Wu*).[261] In the commentary of 'profundity', Wang Bi tends to elucidate

[260] For the distinction of the *dao*, to see chapter 2.

[261] He claims that: " 故常無欲，以觀其妙；妙者，微之極也。萬物始於微而後成，始於無而後生。故常無欲空虛，可以觀其始物之妙。常有欲，以觀其徼。徼，歸終也。凡有之為利，必以無為用。欲之所本，適道而後濟。故常有欲，可以觀其終物之徼也。""'Profundity' means the ultimate of minuteness. The ten thousand entities begin in the minute and then only become complete, they begin in Non-being, and then only come to life. Therefore, while they are permanently without desires and their concerns are being emptied, it is possible, 'by means of this to perceive the subtlety out of which' it initiates entities. 'boundary' means the final point to which entities return/relate back. Generally speaking, for entities to be beneficial, they have to get their usefulness from Non-being; that on which desires are based will only be satisfied as a consequence of adapting to the way. That is why, 'while they are constantly with desires,' it is possible 'by means of this to perceive the limiting' in

the connection between having no desires (無欲) and the Non-being (無 *Wu)* by means of elaborating that the status of having desires is the condition to see "the ten thousand entities begin in the minute and then only become complete, they begin in Non-being, and then only come to life".[262] However, Wang Bi has basically paraphrased the text of the *Laozi*, and rendered this interpretation of "profundity". He does not clarify what kind of status "having no desires" should be or what kind of desires should be banished and eliminated.

Nonetheless, Wang Bi notes that Non-being (無 *wu*) is more fundamental and radical than Being (有 *you*). Being (有 *you*) is beneficial to the moral agent, while the attainment of the benefit is based on the usefulness of Non-being (無 *wu*). Having desires (有欲) is the same in that it cannot function when the moral agent is Non-being (無 *wu*), otherwise, there will not be final ends for these desires.[263] I agree with Wang Bi that having desires 有欲 makes the moral agent acknowledge the boundaries between heaven and earth and the consequences and final end of objects and events. However, to a certain degree Wang Bi obfuscates the discussion of human desires because he does not clearly specify the kinds of desires the moral agent possesses or define the procedure to acknowledge the boundaries between heaven and earth. Through contextualising chapters 36, 37, 46, and 61 and conceptualising human desires, Virág[264] asserts that not all desires are negative in the *Laozi*, and there is a sort of connotation of desire in the *Laozi* that entails higher order that generates the "cosmic order". Having been sympathetic to Virág's assertion, I intend to show that human desires, the main institution in the *Laozi* to generate motivation for the moral agent to act, should be confronted by

which it finalises entities." (Wagner, R. (2000). *A Chinese Reading of the Daodejing* (SUNY series in Chinese philosophy and culture). Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, p.122)

[262] Ibid.

[263] Wagner, R. (2000). *A Chinese Reading of the Daodejing* (SUNY series in Chinese philosophy and culture). Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, p.122

[264] Virág, C. (2017). The Emotions in Early Chinese Philosophy. Oxford University Press, p. 75.

delimiting the emotional desires and fulfilling the bodily desires in order to achieve the status of *guayu* – the ideal like level.

First, there seems to be consensus that in the *Laozi* human desires hinder moral agents understanding and attaining of the *dao*.[265] It is true that we can find that desires connoting a willingness to attain something and its corresponding emotions are often responsible for wars or chaos in the *Laozi*.[266] I must note that while there is no direct indication of human desires inciting wars or chaos, there are depictions of images to illustrate it happening. Chapter 46 denotes an image of war horses that were born on the battleground to indicate a ruler's desire to conquer other states, which can only occur through the outbreak of wars and chaos.[267] However, chapter 1 denotes that the moral agent always possesses desires as a condition to contemplate the boundaries of the *dao*. Graham [268] notes that the *Laozi* dismisses the dichotomy of desire and no desire by means of mentioning that people are constantly having desires and having no desires, which is because, for Graham, mentioning desire and desireless and name and nameless are unnecessary to possess the *dao*.[269] However, I disagree that the *Laozi* intends to dismiss the dichotomy of having desires and having no desires, but rather think that having desires and having no desires reflects the status of moral agents in different situations, which allows the *Laozi* to use the term 'constant 常 *chang*' to modify both. Indeed, it seems puzzling that on the one hand, the

[265] Virág, C. (2017), p. 75; Moeller G, (2006), p.91.

[266] Moeller G, (2006), p.91.

[267] 天下有道，卻走馬以糞。天下無道，戎馬生於郊。When the Dao prevails in the world, they send back their swift horses to (draw) the dung- carts. When the Dao is disregarded in the world, the war-horses breed in the border lands. (translated by James Legge)

[268] Graham, A.C., 1999. *Disputers of the Tao : philosophical argument in ancient China*, Chicago, IL: Open Court, p. 220.

[269] Virág, C. (2017), p. 80. Virág clearly notes and disputes Graham's point on the indifference of desire in this chapter.

Laozi treats having desires as a kind of condition to contemplate some aspects of the *dao*; but on the other hand, advocates that desires are negative, and demands the moral agent to banish them. This makes me question and examine why desires are important to the *Laozi*. The necessity of the divergence of human desires in the *Laozi* offers accounts for distinguishing and eliminating the emotional desires that pertain to the heart, in which the heart/mind is affected by emotional desires through sense organs (those desires in Plato are categorised as the spirited desire and rational desire which are the ones that motivate moral agents to pursue fame, wealth, intellect, knowledge, virtue and so on),[270] and desires for things that exceed the minimum required for living but provide pleasure.[271] For moral agents, I will further argue that having few desires (寡欲 *guayu*) or no desires above the minimum required to live(不过欲 *buguoyu*) is the best situation the moral agent can achieve in human society.

Second, the *Laozi* juxtaposes the opposite conducts that is respectively connected with the body and heart of the moral agent. That is to say, emptying the heart but fulfilling the body of the ruled is the principle guidance of the sage. As chapter 3 reveals, emotional desires disturb the heart, so the objective of the sage is to empty the hearts of the masses (民 *min*) but fulfil their bodies.[272] One way of emptying emotional desires from their hearts is to prevent them from seeing desirable objects, as chapter 3 notes, "*do not see what can be desired by them (the ruled), the heart would not be disturbed.*"[273] The ruled in

[270] Graham, A.C., 1999, p. 220. I am not suggesting that these objects are or should pursued in accordance with the sequence in Plato.

[271] In this *Laozi*, bodily desires pertains to human body, which relates to terms such as belly 腹 *fu*, sinew 筋 *jin* bones 骨 *gu*; whereas emotional desires pertains to mind, which relates to terms such as heart 心 *xin*, eyes 目 *mu*.

[272] chapter 3 是以聖人之治，虛其心，實其腹，弱其志，強其骨。*That is the rule of the sage, to empty their hearts, (but) to fulfil their belly, to weaken their aspiration, (but) to strengthen their bones (body).* (translated by James Legge)

[273] 不見可欲，使心不亂。

human society have natural bodily desires to eat and drink, as well as other desires. Filling the bellies of the ruled is enough to ensure their required demands have been fulfilled. This envisages that the ruled people in *the small state* the *Laozi* outlined in chapter 80 should think (their) food sweet; (their) clothes beautiful; (their) dwelling places comfortable, and their costume joyful.[274] The *Laozi* does not claim that ruled people have special goods in their lives, but with empty minds and hearts, which do not desire more than their minimum needs, they treat their possessions as the best. No passage in the *Laozi* articulates the dichotomy of rigid demand of needs or desires and non-rigid ones, whereas Plato distinguishes them in the *Republic* (the *Republic* Book VIII 559a-d). However, we can find the implicit implication that the rigid demands for the *Laozi* are those in chapter 3 where the bellies should be fulfilled for the maintenance of life; whereas, non-rigid demands are those beyond the minimum needs for the sake of sensual pleasure. Once the ruled long for something for the sake of sensual pleasure, they chase those pleasures, leading to the heart being disturbed again. In this manner of speaking, needs beyond the minimum required to live should be eliminated.

As Virág argues "*first, they represent desire for unnatural things—things that are created (zuo 作) by the "sharp" tools and ingenuity of civilised life. Second, insofar as such sensual desires are not inherent to the natural human being, but are aroused by external things, they signal our vulnerability and passivity to things beyond our control…and third, these sensual desires differ from more natural forms of desire insofar as they can never be satisfied; they endlessly reproduce themselves, leading one to constantly yearn for new sources of pleasure and delight*."[275]

I fully agree with Virág that unlike bodily desires, sensual desires can never be satisfied, because they are not inherent to us.[276] She argues that sensual

[274] chapter 80 甘其食，美其服，安其居，樂其俗。
[275] Virág, C. (2017). The Emotions in Early Chinese Philosophy. Oxford University Press, p. 85
[276] Ibid, 86-93

desires are not innate to humans, but are provoked by external objects, which indicates the vulnerability and passivity to things beyond moral agents' control. Furthermore, sensual desires endlessly reproduce themselves creating a longing for more and more after each sensual desire is satisfied, because in her argument, she believes that civilisation creates things and concepts in human society such as socially constructed good and moral values such as filiality 孝 *xiao* and so on. According to Virág's explanation, "aware of fulfilment 知足 *zhizu*"[277], stated as the "sagely awareness" means the higher level or forms of knowing, can satisfy the natural desires, yet sensual desires cannot be satisfied because the spawning of sensual desires is fuelled by civilisation and its products.[278]

However, I disagree with Virág's interpretation on the point of 'awareness of fulfilment 知足 *zhizu*', because I assert that the way to minimise bodily desires should be through awareness of fulfilment (知足 *zhizu*), since emotional desire should be completely eliminated, and only for bodily desires, is there a standard of minimum intrinsic demands. That is to say, only if moral agents are unaware of fulfilment (不知足 *buzhizu*), are desires for needs beyond their minimum demands aroused. The awareness of fulfilment (知足 *zhizu*) requires the moral agent's self-reflection on knowing the amount and kind of what they need. On the other hand, emptying emotional desires from the heart is the condition for the moral agent to act *wuwei*, because emotional desires for the *Laozi* are the trigger of the motivation that drives moral agents to act in ways that generate the chaos of moral agents and society. Nevertheless, we can

[277] For the discussion of the awareness of fulfilment 知足 *zhizu*, to see Moeller's book *the philosophy of Daodejing*, chapter 6, p. 94, he argues that for the contentment the Laozi does not differentiate among desires belonging to bodily, emotional or even states. I argue against that there is desires of states in the *Laozi*, because desires of the states should belong to the emotional desires of rulers. The states do not have autonomy to conquer other states, rather rulers intend to conquer other countries.

[278] Virág, C. (2017). The Emotions in Early Chinese Philosophy. Oxford University Press, p. 86.

find few supportive ideas for the condition of emptying the heart in the *Laozi* that do not disturb the moral agent's heart by the perceptions of desirable objects, apart from the aforementioned passage.

I shall now move on to discussing how *zhizu* can lead moral agents to the status of *guayu* that is the ideal-like state in human society. The *Laozi* indicates that the best moral psychological situation for moral agents is to be in a state of having no desires (無欲 *wuyu*). In chapter 37,[279] the passage does not merely reveal the consequence of being in a state of having no desires, but also reveals the tension between the motivation of the creation and non-motivation, *viz*. the desire to act and having no desires. In this chapter, it is envisaged that the world possesses the traits of self-transformation (自化 *zihua*), self-implementation (自正 *zizheng*), and self-settling (自定 *ziding*) to be associated with the *dao* at the ideal level. We can see that in the *Laozi* all these 'self' features are under the same condition that is associated with the *dao* at the ideal level having the traits of *wuwei* and *wuyu*. Actions performed in the status of *wuyu* is not triggered by the motivation that is provoked by desires, but rather by the given situation that indicates all performed actions are self-motivated and spontaneous, rather than interfering actions. Thus, the world regulated by the *dao* at the ideal level is ideal, and the performed actions are self-motivated because of the moral agent being in the status of *wuyu*.

On the other hand, constantly 常 *chang* having desires *youyu* is also emphasised in chapter 1 of the *Laozi*, and attention on it has been drawn on the connection with the contemplation of the *dao*. As aforementioned, we

[279] Chapter 37 道常無為而無不為。侯王若能守之，萬物將自化。化而欲作，吾將鎮之以無名之樸。無名之樸，夫亦將無欲。不欲以靜，天下將自定。*The Dao in its regular course does nothing (for the sake of doing it), and so there is nothing which it does not do. If princes and kings were able to maintain it, all things would of themselves be transformed by them. If this transformation became to me an object of desire, I would express the desire by the nameless simplicity. Simplicity without a name is free from all external aim. With no desire, at rest and still, all things go right as of their will.* (translated by James Legge)

cannot find anything explicitly in the *Laozi* that offers the procedure of transiting from the status of *youyu* to that of *wuyu*, nor does it offer elucidation of coexisted contradiction. On the contrary, the syntactical instances of coexisted contradiction scatters throughout the text, such as "*its largest square doth yet no corner show; A vessel great, it is the slowest made; Loud is its sound, but never word it said; A semblance great, the shadow of a shade*".[280] Such passages can be treated as the manifestation of the *dao* by means of the reversals. As Liu Xiaogan notes, 'this method' is the application of the value of *ziran* and *wuwei*, which employs the desireless motivation to the regulation of human society.[281] Moral agents need to satisfy their natural physical bodily desires and also those emotional desires that are aroused by their encounters with the external world, and thus it seems impossible for them to reach, and stay in, the state of the ideal moral psychological situation. However, the *Laozi* provides an intermediate state for moral agents and this is the state of having few desires *guayu* or *buguoyu* as the best situation that the moral agent can achieve in real human society. For this situation, moral agents have to retain bodily desires to sustain their lives, yet emotional desires can be emptied *xu* from the heart. Nevertheless, it is fundamental for moral agents to be aware of fulfilment 知足 *zhizu,* because if they keep eating, drinking or fulfilling other bodily desires beyond basic needs, it would cause chaos. Similarly, the *Laozi* suggests that the outbreak of wars at the level of the states are caused by desires of rulers intending to conquer or take over other states (chapter 46), and the occurrence of robbery at individual level is caused by desires of moral agents who long for luxury goods (chapter 3). In the *Laozi*, desires initially trigger the moral agents to act to obtain what they want; and, according to the philosophy of the *Laozi*, the action driven by desires would normally have negative consequences, such as the outbreak of wars or the occurrence of robbery. Thus, the *Laozi* indicates that the optimal situation for moral agents

[280] Chapter 41 大方無隅；大器晚成；大音希聲；大象無形

[281] Liu Xiaogan, 2015 *Laozi ninadai xinkao ji sixiang xinquan*, *sanminshuju*, Taiwan, P. 162

would be in the state of having no desires 無欲 *wuyu*.[282] In chapter 46, the *Laozi* depicts the gradual reinforcement of the adverse situations that arise from emotional desires and not being aware of being fulfilled 知足 *zhizu* as: "*the sin cannot be greater than having something to desire, The misfortune cannot be greater than being not self-fulfilled; the fault cannot be greater than desiring to obtain*. 罪莫大於可欲；禍莫大於不知足。咎莫憯於欲得."[283] The term "can be desired 可欲" appears in chapter 3 and in chapter 46 "不見可欲 do not see what can be desired." We can see that for those desires held by the heart, the mistake is to start desiring and so it is best to have no desires at all. Thus, when the *Laozi* says in chapter 1 that "常有欲 there are always desires" it indicates that the basic bodily desires are consistent and will always be with moral agents. That is to say, it is impossible for moral agents to have no desires in real human society, of which the *Laozi* is consciously aware. Thus, once moral agents empty themselves of emotional desires and are aware of fulfilment 知足 *zhizu*, they will attain the status of 寡欲 *guayu,* which indicates that bodily desires of moral agents are retained, but emotional desires are emptied from the heart.

I shall now draw a short conclusion of my arguments regarding this aspect of the *Laozi*. I have shown that desires are categorised into bodily and emotional desires, in which bodily desires pertain to the body and emotional desires pertain to the heart. The *Laozi* argues that desires are necessary for the moral

[282] LaFargue, M. (1992). *The tao of the Tao te ching : A translation and commentary* (SUNY series in Chinese philosophy and culture). Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, p.45. And Ames, R.T. & Hall, D.L., (2004). Daodejing : "making this life significant" : a philosophical translation First trade paperback., New York: Ballantine Books, 149.

[283] Chapter 46 天下有道，卻走馬以糞。天下無道，戎馬生於郊。禍莫大於不知足；咎莫大於欲得。故知足之足，常足矣。The human world conceives the *dao*, the horses are distributed in order to work in the field. The human world does not conceive the *dao*, the war-horses are born in the border lands. The misfortune cannot be greater than being not self-fulfilled; the fault cannot be greater than desiring to obtain. Thus, the fulfilment of knowing the fulfilment, that is consistently fulfilled.

motivations of the moral agent to act in real human society, because firstly, the *Laozi* believes that moral agents in real human society consistently have desires, and secondly, even in the ideal-like situation moral agents will have to retain bodily desires and attain the capability of being aware of fulfilment 知足 *zhizu*. Yet, in the ideal situation, moral agents act *wuwei* which is conducted by the judgment of the given situation in the state of having no desires. In the following section, I will start analysing the notion of desires as the motivators for moral agents in Plato.

3.5 Moral Motivation in Plato

Plato discusses many aspects of the issue of moral motivation, including why moral agents should act morally, how to make the action moral to the moral agent, and why the knowledge of morality is motivating.[284] In this section, I focus primarily on the tripartite soul and the relations between the tripartite soul and desires. In the *Republic*, Plato discusses that moral knowledge is sufficient to motivate the moral agent to act morally. This discussion concerns whether it is belief or desire that motivates the moral agent to act, or a combination of the two. According to Socratic intellectualism, knowledge should govern the moral agent's decisions of conduct. Early Platonic dialogues indicate that not only should moral agents act in a predicable way, but if any two moral agents have the same belief, then they would act identically. For Platonic Socrates, knowledge is sufficient to motivate moral agents to act, he denies any dispositions, emotions and desires to motivate the agent to act. In this part, I focus on how each of the different parts of the soul motivate the moral agent to act. I will also attempt to show how Plato answers the question of moral motivation in which beliefs or desires motivate the moral agent to act and I will demonstrate how human desires act as a motivation for moral agents to act. But whether it is belief or desire that triggers the moral motivation is more difficult to elucidate. This is because in the *Republic* Book 4, Plato presents that the rational part of the human soul will makes judgements of what is the

[284] Vasiliou, I., 2016. *Moral motivation : a history*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, p. 15.

best for the whole soul, but the other parts of the human soul will overcome the rational soul and make judgements (*Republic* 441e). That is to say, desires that belong to each part of the human soul will motivate moral agents to act differently. I suggest that Plato indicates that actions are right if they are performed by moral agents who harmonise their tripartite souls, i.e. gathering and putting in good order the reason, spirited and appetitive parts of the soul.

Plato notes that "*What do you think about knowledge? … Most people think this way about it, that it is not a powerful thing, neither a leader nor a ruler… while knowledge is often present in a man, what rules him is not knowledge but rather anything else – sometimes anger, sometimes pleasure, sometimes pain, at other times love, often fear; they think of his knowledge as being utterly dragged around by all these other things as if it were a slave. Now does the matter seem like to you, or does it seem to you that knowledge is a fine thing capable of ruling a person, and if someone were to know what is good and bad, then he would not be forced by anything to act otherwise than knowledge dictates, and intelligence would be sufficient to save a person?*" (*Protagoras* 352 b8-c8) Within this passage, Plato does not say that all people would be controlled by their emotions but rather used 'most people'. The main point of this passage in the *Protagoras* is to argue that if a moral agent had the knowledge of what good is, they would not act contrary to what they know. Moral agents would perform the action that results in the better outcome rather than the one resulting in the worse outcome. For example, a moral agent with knowledge of the drawbacks of smoking cigarettes would be aware that not smoking is far better for his or her health and would commit to not smoking. Most scholars believe that Socrates thinks that having knowledge of the good is sufficient for people to be good and virtuous, and furthermore to act consistently virtuously. On the basis of this understanding of Socratic Intellectualism, it is clear that Socrates denies the situation of *akrasia*, the weakness of will.[285] However, Plato presents the division of the human soul that allows the moral agent to be affected by a weakness of will. The affection

[285] Vasiliou, I., 2016, p. 20.

of the weakness of will for moral agents generates conflict within the moral motivations, which appears in the *Republic* Books 4, 8, and 9 and also the *Phaedrus* (*Phaedrus* 246a) regarding the conflicts of the tripartite soul and the great speech on the charioteer which represents the tripartite soul.[286]

To this point it is clear that Socratic Intellectualism, firstly advocates that actions or moral actions are led by the knowledge of moral agents, and secondly it denies the weakness of will by advocating that moral agents will always be rational and commit to the better course of action. However, as I mentioned above, Plato allows for conflicts among different parts of the human soul, thus, it is clear that there is a mismatch between the early dialogues on the theory of motivation — Socratic Intellectualism — and the later dialogues — the relationship between the motivation and the tripartite soul. Rachana Kamtekar suggests firstly that the middle and later dialogues deny that non-rational parts of the soul motivate moral agents to act in isolation from reasoning; and secondly, in the early dialogues, Socrates also recognises the non-rational parts of the soul, but that they motivate moral agents indirectly.[287] She further argues that "all these motivations are ours, even when acting on them undermines our pursuit of our own good".[288] It is therefore necessary to look at the theory of the tripartite soul and the moral psychology as well as actions motivated by each part of the tripartite soul.

3.6 The Tripartite Soul as the Motivator of Actions in the *Republic*

According to Plato the soul is made up of three parts, the rational soul, the non-rational soul and the appetitive soul: the rational part of the soul is attached to knowledge and truth as well as regulating the life of the moral agent in respect of the whole soul and the rational soul itself, (*Republic* 442c); the non-rational part of the soul consists of the spirited part of the soul

[286] Ibid. Vasiliou presents similar argument in his book.

[287] Kamtekar, R. (2018). *Plato's moral psychology : Intellectualism, the divided soul, and the desire for good* (First ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.2.

[288] Ibid, p.131.

associated with anger, which in some situations is also associated with the rational part of the soul; the appetitive soul is responsible for natural and sexual desires, as described in the *Republic* Book 4 (*Republic* 436b-441c).[289] Plato suggests that these three kinds of desires are quite different from one another and trigger different actions. I suggest that Plato is saying two things; first, desires are necessary motivations for moral agents to act, although there would be a conflict between different kinds of desires; and second, each part of the soul can motivate moral agents to perform voluntary actions.

Let's try to determine in that way whether these parts are the same or different. … it is obvious that the same thing will not be willing to do or undergo opposites in the same part of itself, in relation to the same thing, at the same time. So, if we ever find this happening in the soul, we will know that we aren't dealing with one thing but many.

Plato believes that the parts of the soul are distinct by virtue of the fact that the same thing cannot do different things at the same time (*Republic* 436b, cff. 439b). Whilst it is plausible that the human soul consists of different parts, it is necessary to have a closer look at the rational part that is in charge of thinking and reasoning and which performs the role of controlling the agent to act. Plato declares that in the battle between bidding and forbidding of drinking, forbidding triumphs bidding and thus the forbidding is in charge. The passage reveals two aspects: in one aspect, the non-rational part has the possibility and capability to motivate the agent to act, and in the other aspect, the appetitive part of the soul is implicitly deemed the less influential part.

[289] There are many literatures regarding this point, such as: Irwin, T. (1995). Plato's ethics. New York ; Oxford: Oxford University Press. Annas, J., & Plato. (1981). An introduction to Plato's Republic. Oxford: Clarendon Press. Lorenz, H. (2006). The brute within : Appetitive desire in Plato and Aristotle (Oxford philosophical monographs).

Based on an assumption that one thing cannot do different things at the same time, Plato implies which actions are driven by different parts of the soul (*Republic* 436b8).[290] Based on this passage and 439c,[291] it is credible to draw the conclusion that there are two parts of the soul attempting to motivate moral agents to act in different ways, i.e. either drinking or not drinking while being thirsty.[292] Nevertheless, it is impossible to draw the conclusion from this passage that the rational part of soul is always able to suppress the non-rational part of the soul,[293] unless Plato himself implicitly sets up an argument that the rational part of the soul is hierarchically higher than non-rational parts of the soul. Furthermore, it is a matter of fact, according to Plato, that the appetitive part of the human soul would motivate moral agents to drink while having appetitive desires, whereas the rational part of soul would forbid drinking for other reasons. However, based on the passage 439c, it is impossible to judge whether drinking or non-drinking is the right decision to make. Plato further argues that the rational part of the human soul cares for the interest of the whole soul, but the other two parts only take care of their own aspect, thus the rational part of the human soul should rule (*Republic*

[290] Irwin, T. (1995). Plato's ethics. New York ; Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 204.

[291] The *Republic* 439d notes that "Hence it isn't unreasonable for us to claim that they are two and different from one another. We will call the part of the soul with which it calculates the rational part and the part with which it lusts, hungers, thirsts, and gets excited by other appetites the irrational appetitive part, companion of certain indulgences and pleasures."

[292] Annas, J., & Plato. (1981). An introduction to Plato's Republic. Oxford: Clarendon Press. Annas thinks that Plato here meets two grave drawbacks. "Firstly, the parts it produces do not seem to be the same as the parts that Plato's account of the individual actually needs, and which he makes use of throughout the book. Secondly, there is something odd about the argument's status, for it establishes the distinctness of the parts on the basis of a necessary truth, whereas elsewhere (581b-c) he argues from experience that the distinctness of the parts can be seen in the different kinds of lives people lead." (p. 125)

[293] In the Republic 441e, Plato notes that the rational part of human soul take cares of the interest of the whole soul, and foresight for the whole soul as well.

441e).[294] Up to now, I have demonstrated that based on the *Republic* Book IV 436-440, Plato argues that the rational and appetitive parts of human soul possess their own desires that can motivate moral agents differently at the same time.

John Cooper argues that the case of there being two contrary desires is incomplete and unclear, because Plato does not explicitly declare that to which the rational part of human soul goes against, i.e. if the reason goes against the object that the appetitive desires long for or goes against the appetitive desires as a whole. Although Cooper finally concludes that the function of the rational part of human soul in this passage is to rule and care for the interest of the whole soul rather than just pursue knowledge of the truth, he also argues that avoiding doing something, which can be expressed as 'the reason restrains moral agents from doing such and such', does not mean that the moral agent is motivated by the reason to prevent them from doing such and such. For example, he describes a thirsty person who longs to drink, yet also knows that the only available water will cause illness. The thirsty person therefore chooses not to drink to avoid becoming ill. Cooper believes that, in this case, the choosing not to drink is driven by a desire not to be ill rather than a contrary desire not to drink, leading him to argue that these two desires are physical, rather than the contrary desires that are derived from different parts of the human soul, i.e. the rational and appetitive.[295]

I agree with Cooper that the rational part of the human soul functions to rule and care for the interests of the whole soul and that it has two functions in the *Republic*. Firstly, at 581b, the rational part is the part that loves wisdom and

[294] Annas, J., & Plato. (1981). *An introduction to Plato's Republic*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, p.126. The rational part of human soul is expressed to have two functions: 1. At the Republic 581b, the rational part is the part that loves wisdom and loves learning. The rational part of human soul pursues the knowledge of the truth and attain pleasures to do this. 2. at 441e, the rational part of human soul rule the whole soul, since it knows what is the best for the soul as the whole.

[295] Cooper, J.M., 1984. Plato's Theory of Human Motivation. *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, 1(1), pp.3–21, p.6-8

loves learning. The rational part of the human soul pursues the knowledge of truth and attains pleasures in so doing. Secondly, at 441e, the rational part rules the whole soul, since it knows what is best for the soul as a whole. However, I disagree that in the case of drinking contaminated water those two desires are both derived from physical desires, i.e. the feeling of thirst and the aversion to being ill from drinking contaminated water. The aversion to being ill is based on the judgement made from the process of reasoning that the only available water is contaminated. The moral agent either has seen the water being contaminated or has examined the water and found it to be contaminated. Furthermore, not only does reasoning make the judgement that the water is contaminated, but also evaluates and knows that this water will cause illness if consumed. Based on the process of reasoning, the moral agent should not drink this water despite being thirsty unless the act of not drinking will result in a worse outcome than drinking – illness from contaminated water is better than death through lack of water. Thus, the desire to drink is a physical desire and the decision not to drink is a judgement.

In this scenario the judgement is made by the rational part of human soul and the physical desire is made by the appetitive part of human soul, in terms of the tripartite human soul, Plato also presents the spirited part of the human soul in alliance with either the rational part or the appetitive part of human soul. The spirited part of the human soul is complex in the *Republic* Book 4, 8 and 9, in the passage 441a, and appears to be closer to the meaning of the word *'to thumoeiudes'*, which means anger, leading to having a strong tendency to be aggressive and violent. Thus, Plato said that this part of the soul can also be found in children and animals (*Republic* 441 a-b, cff. 375 a-b).[296] Nevertheless, in passage 581 a-b, the spirited part of the human soul is 'wholly

[296] Cooper, J.M., 1984, Cooper has a detailed analysis of the connotation of '*to thumoeiudes'* in his paper, he argues that the love of honour and fame for the spirited soul is derived from the connotation of 'anger'. And also Annas mentions the translation of 'spirited' is from '*to thumoeiudes*'. Annas, J., & Plato. (1981).

dedicated to the pursuit of control, victory and high repute,' (the *Republic* 581 a10) which people can feel proud of. The *Republic* 436b

Republic 440a8-b1

Besides, don't we often notice in other cases that when appetitive forces someone contrary to rational calculation, he reproaches himself and gets angry with that in him that is doing the forcing, so that of the two factions that are fighting a civil war, so to speak, spirited allies itself with reason?

Plato presents an example of Leontius and a corpse, which elucidates how the spirited part of the soul assists the rational part of the soul against the appetitive part of the soul (*Republic* 440a8-b1), and how there is a conflict between different parts of the soul (*Republic* 439e). Leontius was motivated by the appetitive part of his soul to look at a corpse, while the rational part of his soul motivated him to do the opposite. In the passage Plato reveals the conflict between the spirited and the appetitive parts of the soul, since the spirited part of the soul will always ally with the rational part of the soul (*Republic* 440e2-4). Through this anecdote, Plato demonstrates that when moral agents are motivated by the appetitive part of human soul, the spirited part of the human soul allying with the rational part would be provoked and get angry toward themselves.

It is reasonable to question whether Plato's anecdote of Leontius does demonstrate a connection between the spirited part and the rational part of the human soul. It appears that the anecdote reveals that Leontius possesses two contrary desires, one to look at the corpse, and one to avoid looking at the corpse. However, are they contrary desires on the same level or two layers of desire? The first layer is the aversion to looking at the corpse, and the second layer is the desire to look at corpse,[297] because the spirited soul, being different

[297] Lorenz, H. (2006). The brute within : Appetitive desire in Plato and Aristotle (Oxford philosophical monographs), pp. 16-7. He has pointed out this interpretation as well in his book, I am sympatric to his argument.

from the appetitive soul, can make a contrary judgement against the appetitive soul and its desires (*Republic* 440a3). At first glance, the spirited part of the human soul seems to align itself with the rational part, because the rational part of the soul tells Leontius that it is shameful to look at the dead body. Whilst Plato states that the rational part of the human soul concerns the interest of the whole soul, his Leontius anecdote entails and implies that the spirited part of soul has the capabilities of independently judging the value of actions. Leontius' anger is triggered by the spirited part of his soul as a result of persisting in pursuing the fulfilment of his appetitive desires and because of the conflict between his rational desire and appetitive desire. Hendrik Lorenz argues that there are two kinds of desires, namely first-order desires and second-order desires. First order desires are those conflicting desires moral agents would possess in a given situation such as Leontius possessing the desire of looking or not looking at the corpse. The second order desires are the aversion to the first-order desires, namely, in the anecdotal anger aroused from Leontius towards himself as a result of looking at the corpse. He argues that the second-order desires are value-based motivations that involve the reason to judge if the action motivated by the first-order desires are moral. He further arrives at the conclusion that the second order desires are higher and more sensitive and responsive to the first order desires, and the spirited part of the soul is also contained or involved in the second order desires.[298] I agree with him that the spirited part of the human soul contains an independent motivation to trigger moral agents to act upon it. However it is puzzling why he seems to place the spirited part of the human soul higher than the rational part of the human soul because the first-order desires include decisions made by the rational part of the human soul, i.e. the contrary desires – desiring to look at the corpse is the appetitive desire and repulsion at looking at the corpse is made by the rational part of the human soul. It seems to me that Lorenz places the contrary desires in the first order desires because he treats these two contrary desires on the same level. In the anecdote, according to Lorenz, the

[298] Ibid, pp. 16-7.

anger comes later and involves value-based judgment, the second order desires are higher than the first order desires. Thus, the spirited part of the human soul is higher than the rational part of the human soul. The action of Leontius swearing at himself is motivated by the spirited soul, even though Leontius feels and agrees with the judgement of the reasoning that it is shameful to look at the corpse. This clearly shows that the spirited part of the human soul could, on its own, motivate moral agents to perform actions accordingly. It is a kind of moral motivation that can be educated in accordance with Plato (*Republic* 549e- 550c). The moral agent was lured by both the nourishment of teaching for the rational part of the human soul and that of the spirited and appetitive parts of human soul. The moral agent is exposed to these two tensions of forces, which makes them settle in the middle to be victory-loving and becomes a proud and honour-loving person. This kind of education makes the moral agent care more about how their own 'ideal' image appears to others. If the actions performed when they are under the control of the spirited part of the human soul downgrades or does not match up to their 'ideal' self-image, then due to a desire to preserve their honour their anger would be aroused to go against what she or he has done.[299]

Furthermore, the three parts of the human soul, i.e. appetitive, spirited and rational soul, can all be motivators of action for moral agents. The rational part of the human soul is in charge of reasoning; the spirited part is in charge of honour-loving and victory-loving; and the appetitive part is in charge of natural desires. They are different from and have the capacity of conflicting with each other in some situations. Plato declares at the *Republic*441e, the rational part of the human soul rules the whole soul, since it knows what is best for the soul as a whole. To take the example of Leontius, the decision made by the rational soul, despite taking the considerations of the spirited soul into account, not to go against the desire of looking at the corpse for the sake of the interest of the

[299] Annas, J., & Plato. (1981). Annas uses the term "the self-image" to describe this kind of situation. It means similarly that the moral agent does not reckon that this kind of action should not be done by him, because this does not fit his understanding of himself. (p. 128)

whole soul, whereas the anger expressed is based on the spirited soul and only considers the honour of the moral agent, rather than the interest of the whole soul. Given this premise, the conclusion can reasonably be drawn that actions motivated by the rational part of the human soul prevail over actions by the spirited soul and the appetitive soul.

We find that in the *Republic* 436a, 441e, 549b4, 580d, 581b Plato claims that the rational part of the soul is wise, and exercises foresight on behalf of the whole soul. The rational soul according to Plato 'loves wisdom and loves learning'. It is in charge of two things, one is to learn where the truth lies, and the other is to search for the truth and find pleasure from learning (*Republic* 581b). The functions of the rational soul are presumed by Plato as the premise of his argument that the life of a person who has been shaped and led by the rational soul is better than the one that is led by other parts of the soul. Nevertheless, there is no elaboration of the reason why the rational part of the human soul functions and cares for the interest of the whole soul. Depending on this open question, we cannot assert that a life led by the rational soul is better than one led by other parts of the human soul. Since this question is closely related to the life of the moral agent and the function of the rational part of the human soul, it is necessary and helpful to recall and to have a look at the *Timaeus* on the final moral ends of the moral agent – what kind of life should be the best for the moral agent live – and also what is the relationship between the rational part of the human soul and the procedure of attaining the final moral ends.[300] In this part, I will mainly focus on the development of the tripartite soul as the motivators for moral agents to perform actions, and how and why the rational part of the human soul has been established as the best and the greatest moral source for motivations.

Timaeus 88b states that "*Given that human beings have two sets of natural desires — desires of the body for food and desires for the most divine part of*

[300] Johansen, T.K., 2004. Plato's Natural Philosophy: A Study of the Timaeus-Critias, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 151.

us for wisdom — the motions of the stronger part will predominate and amplify their own interest. They render the functions of the soul dull, stupid and forgetful, thereby bringing on the gravest disease of all: ignorance."[301] *It can be seen that in this passage Plato claims that there are two kinds of natural desires, i.e. bodily desires and rational desires for the knowledge of the truth, and both kinds of desires are for the well-being of the moral agent, the bodily desires are for the body, and the rational desires are for the soul. Plato distinguishes two other categories of desires, which are necessary desires and unnecessary desires. Desires are necessary if they are helpful for the health and well-being of the moral agent, whereas they are unnecessary if they go beyond this and seek things which are harmful to "both the body and to the reason and moderation of the soul" (the Republic 559d-e).*[302]*. Those desires that cannot be dismissed or restrained, or whose satisfaction is good for us are necessary desires (558 d8). The rational part is the part that loves wisdom and loves learning and pursues knowledge of the truth and attains pleasures in so doing (581b). For Plato, these two kinds of desires or motivations for the same reason need to be fulfilled, because the implication of the juxtaposition of these two desires indicates each part of the human soul being deficient in something, i.e. desires of appetitive is deficient in food and drink, being the same with the desires in wisdom. The bodily desires should be fulfilled for the energy of the function for the rational soul* (*Timaeus* 43b).

The process by which the cosmic soul is created displays interaction between the motions of the cosmic soul and cognition. That is to say, in the process of the creation of the cosmic soul, (*Timaeus* 37c-d), on the one hand, it reveals the process of the creation of the cosmic soul, and on the other hand, establishes how intelligence works in accordance with the operation of the particular parts of the cosmic soul relating to the procedure of thinking and

[301] Cooper, J., & Hutchinson, D. (1997). *Complete works*. Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing.

[302] This is in a similar fashion to the Laozi on the bodily desires that are also separated into the basic needs (necessary desires) and the exceeded needs (unnecessary desires).

cognition. Every rational soul is created in the same manner and quality (*Timaeus* 41e),[303] and each is made with the same ratios of materials but yet less pure materials in the same fashion (*Timaeus* 41d4-7). This indicates that the rational (immortal) soul of the human being is supposed to work in the same manner as the cosmic soul including the motions and the circles of the Same and the Difference (*Timaeus* 35b-37c). However, once the rational soul is embedded into the human body, then the rational soul does not merely come across a single motion, but rather seven motions, Plato explains it with the text:

Timaeus 43a-d

"*They proceeded to fuse them together with copious rivets so small as to be invisible, thereby making each body a unit made up of all the components. And they went on to invest this body — into and out of which things were to flow — with the orbits of the immortal soul. These orbits, now bound within a mighty river, neither mastered that river nor were mastered by it, but tossed it violently and were violently tossed by it. Consequently the living thing as a whole did indeed move, but it would proceed in a disorderly, random and irrational way that involved all six of the motions. It would go forwards and backwards, then back and forth to the right and the left, and upwards and downwards, wandering every which way in these six directions. For mighty as the nourishment-bearing billow was in its ebb and flow, mightier still was the turbulence produced by the disturbances caused by the things that struck against the living things. Such disturbances would occur when the body encountered and collided with external fire (i.e. fire other than the body's own) Or for the matter with a hard lump of earth or with the flow of gliding waters, or when it was caught up by a surge of air-driven winds, the motions produced*

[303] 41b … and to the extent that it is fitting for them to possess something that shares our name of 'immortal', something described as divine and ruling within those of them who always consent to follow after justice and after you, I shall begin by sowing that seed, and then had it over to you. The rest of the task is yours. Weave what is mortal to what is immortal, fashion and beget living things. Giver them food, cause them to grow, and when they perish, receive them back again. (translation from Cooper, J., & Hutchinson, D. [1997].)

by all these encounters would then be conducted through the body to the soul, and strike against it."[304]

As I argued in the last chapter, the totality of the human soul is the rational soul bonded with the non-rational soul and embedded in the human body. The rational soul becomes affected because this immortal part of the soul is joined with the human body by "many rivets" unlike the cosmos and the cosmic soul which is a dynamic construction produced by the two working together (*Timaeus* 34b8-c2). The rational soul cannot really function when it first gets into the human body because of the affections from different angles and motions. The motion of the circle of the Same and the Difference are affected, one stops and the other is deflected, causing the rational soul to not operate in the infancy of a human life. This explains the issue Plato left open in the *Republic*, where at birth the spirited soul is in charge of the human body, and as Plato claims that "in small children, one can see that they are full of spirit right from birth, while as far as rational calculation is concerned, some never seem to get a share of it, while the majority do so quite late" (*Republic* 441 a8-b1). The human body nourishes the rational soul and enables it return to the original orbits (*Timaeus* 44b2-5) "if such a person also gets proper nurture to supplement his education, he'll turn out perfectly whole and healthy, and will have escaped the most grievous of illnesses" (*Timaeus* 44b8-c2).

In the Republic, as I argued above, Plato does not justify that the *decision* made by the motivation of the rational soul is always better or more moral than the other parts of the soul. However, in the Timaeus, he does offer reasons why the *motivations* from the rational soul are better and more moral than from other parts of the soul and argues it would be best for the moral agent to follow the motivation of the rational soul rather than the spirited or the appetitive soul. The immortal soul or the rational soul is situated in the head, because the shape of the head resembles the shape of the cosmos (*Timaeus* 44e-45b). The rest of the mortal soul has been placed in the human body. There are two

[304] Translation from Cooper, J., & Hutchinson, D. [1997].

parts of the soul, the one called the spirited soul is placed in the trunk near to the head and submits to the rational soul (*Timaeus* 69d5); the other, called the appetitive soul is placed in "between the midriff and the boundary toward the navel" (*Timaeus* 70e1-2), and is in charge of natural desires, such as nourishment for the human body.

Ideally, the best motivation of the moral agent is to follow the decision made by the rational soul because, according to Plato in the Republic, the rational soul is in charge of calculation, weighing and measuring out the rest of the parts of the soul (*Republic* 441c). The embodied soul as a whole may experience and be in either good or bad status through the interaction of the body and the embodied soul. According to Timaeus 86b, "The foregoing described how diseases of the body happen to come about. The diseases of the soul that result from a bodily condition come about in the following way. It must be granted, surely, that mindlessness is the disease of the soul, and of mindlessness there are two kinds. One is madness, and the other is ignorance. And so, if a man suffers from a condition that brings on either one or the other, that condition must be declared a disease." We can see that the overwhelming input for the desires or the motivation of the bodily appetitive desires will put the embodied soul in a state of disease. The intake of food, drink and sexual enjoyment will pass through the body and reach the embodied soul (*Philebus* 35 c-e). It needs balanced and harmonious decisions for the motivation, rather than fulfil the desires of the spirited and appetitive souls. "All that is good is beautiful, and what is beautiful is not ill-proportioned" (*Timaeus* 87c7). This passage indicates that on the one hand, the motivation of the embodied soul as a whole should be well calculated and fulfilled, and the only part of the soul that has the capability of the calculation is the rational soul. On the other hand, it matches up the harmony of the rational soul in terms of the process of the creation. Aristotle interprets the process of the creation of the cosmic soul/rational soul as: "the soul having been composed from elements and divided according to harmonious numbers, he bent the straight soul into a circle so that the soul would both have cognate perception of harmony and move the universe in symphonic motions" (*De Anima* i.3 406b28–31). Because

the rational soul is created in harmonious fashion, through the motions of the circle of the Same and the Difference, the calculation is drawn out as the best decision for the moral agent to do. Thus, this shows that the rational soul reasons and manages the best motivation for the moral agent.

A comparison of the *Laozi* and Plato in respect of moral motivation clearly shows that both draw attention to the connection between desires and motivation for action by moral agents. Both argue that desires are necessary for the motivations of moral agents to act and both think that a right action should be performed by moral agents who are in the appropriate state. For the *Laozi* the moral agent should be in the state of *wuyu* having no desires, whereas for Plato the moral agent should act based on motivation that is derived from the rational part of the human soul. However, Plato and the *Laozi* differ in their thinking on the notions of desires. In the basic level of comparison between the Laozi and Plato, both argue that the appetitive desires are natural and innate to moral agents. For both, although explained differently, there is a basic need to fulfil the appetitive desires which are necessary for the moral agent to live. However, the exceeding needs for the appetitive desires are considered emotional desires for the *Laozi* but as unnecessary desires for Plato that desist the moral agent from pursuing wisdom and the truth. Plato suggests in the *Republic* 439a that appetitive desires include the objects and the quality of the object, because moral agents not only pursue the need to fulfil appetitive desires, but also feel attraction and repulsion (*Republic* 437c, cff. 589e). Plato and the *Laozi* have similar views on appetitive desires, but Plato elaborates it in more detail than the *Laozi* in respect of the relationship between appetitive desires and motivation for the right action. Moreover, both agree that moral agents can be shaped (the *Laozi*) and educated (in Plato) so as to regulate the desires that motivate them to act. However, they differ in the best life for the moral agent. The best life for the moral agent in Plato is to let the rational soul rule the whole human body and soul, whereas the best life for the moral agent in the *Laozi* would be to have no desires that trigger the moral agent internally, but that instead action is triggered by the whole context of the situation within which the moral agent is situated. For Plato, letting the rational

part of the soul rule the life of human beings is the final moral end that leads human life to become as godlike as possible, whereas for the *Laozi* the final moral end is acting *wuwei* and being in the state of having no desires and to live in accordance with the *dao*.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have found, interpreted, evaluated and compared the notion of moral agent and its related concepts including the formation of moral agent, the final moral end, and moral motivations in the *Laozi* and Plato. I have furthermore shed some light on how these findings could contribute to the same issue in contemporary moral theories.

In the introduction I defined the notion of the moral agent in the *Laozi* and Plato as an autonomous person or entity which can deliberate and make a decision; they are also accountable for their actions and the consequences of their actions. And I have shown that we can find the notion of the moral agent has two levels; the empirical level and the universal level. The empirical level of the moral agent mainly refers to individuals; whereas the universal level refers to the ideal role model in both the *Laozi* and Plato; the sage in the *Laozi* and the philosopher king in Plato. I identified that contemporary moral theories also consider the moral agent, but I have shown that both consequentialism and deontology consider the moral agent at the empirical level, creating an issue in each: 1. consequentialists, despite having the nature of happiness as their moral motivation, are moral egoists whose main concern is happiness in the sense of pleasure and who may to some extent neglect or further abandon some intrinsic good such as virtues for the sake of maximised happiness; 2. deontologists have developed answers to the question why moral agents are willing to be principled, or to fulfil their duties. I have demonstrated that in both the *Laozi* and Plato a link can be found between the final moral ends and their moral motivations which can contribute to a resolution of these issues in consequentialism and deontology.

In the first chapter I demonstrated that both the *Laozi* and Plato have distinguished and ranked different kinds of goodness. Both advocate that the highest goodness should be the intrinsic good and its best consequences because they consider that a properly formed moral agent will simultaneously

possess the intrinsic good and achieve the best consequences. After this, I focused on the ideal moral agent, which was the sage in the *Laozi* and the philosopher king in Plato as well as the process of the formation of those two ideal moral agents.

In the second chapter I explored the final moral ends in both the *Laozi* and Plato. I found that both the *Laozi* and Plato believe that the moral agent should be assimilated to the higher authorities, i.e. for the *Laozi* the moral agent should live in accordance with the *dao*, whereas for Plato the moral agent should order the rational parts of the embodied human soul through observing the heavenly bodies and learning mathematics. In more detailed analysis of the *Laozi*, I have argued that there are three layers of the Weltanschauung that have been demonstrated, which have a close relation to three layers of the conceptions of the *dao*. On the other hand, in my analysis of Plato, I have mainly explored and examined the *Timaeus* in respect of the creation of the cosmic soul and the rational and mortal parts of the human soul so as to scrutinise the issue of the final moral ends in Plato as “to become like gods as much as possible”. I have found that for Plato “to become like gods as much as possible” means to get the rational part of the human soul assimilated to the cosmic soul.

In the third chapter I considered the issue of moral motivation in the Laozi and Plato which has a close relation to their final moral ends, because the final moral ends lead to, and answers, the question of why the moral agent wants to be principled or wants to do something right or good. I found that both the *Laozi* and Plato think that desires are necessary for the moral motivation of the moral agent to act. In the *Laozi*, emotional and bodily desires will trigger different kinds of motivations for the moral agent to act. However, while the *Laozi* supports bodily desires being fulfilled, it espouses that emotional desires that pertain to the heart shouold be dismissed; whereas in Plato, I argued that three parts of the embodied human soul can be the motivators of the moral agent to act, nevertheless Plato merely reckons that the motivation can be moral only in the situation that the rational part of the soul rules the whole

human soul due to the merely rational soul's consideration that is for the benefit of the whole human soul.

Finally, I identified that the *Laozi* and Plato have the same attitudes towards bodily desires and emotional/rational desires. Both think that bodily desires are natural and innate desires for moral agents. For Plato, some bodily desires are necessary to be satisfied and also that is necessary for the moral agent to function their rational part of the human soul in order to reach the final moral ends. Similarly in the *Laozi*, innate bodily desires can be fulfilled in order to achieve the ideal state. Neither Plato nor the *Laozi* treats bodily desires in a negative way but rather shows how to deal with those bodily desires so as to achieve the status of being morally good. Both argue that moral agents can be shaped (the *Laozi*) and educated (in Plato) and regulated in a certain way so as to control their desires that would motivate them to act in different ways.

In conclusion, by exploring the notion of the moral agent in both the *Laozi* and Plato, I believe I have demonstrated the notion of the moral agent and its related aspects, the formation of the moral agent, the final moral ends and moral motivations by means of comparative analysis and that this comparison demonstrates their relevance to contemporary discussions on consequentialism and deontology. I hope in future this research will inform and enrich the discussion on the topic of the moral agent.

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